



(SPECIAL LESSON)  
“A PORTRAIT OF THE REMNANT”

Sunday, August 13, 2023

Instructor: Steve Schmutzer

**INTRO: I felt led to do a special lesson today. Strongly led. Therefore, we have a sudden change in direction this week.**

- A. From the perspective of our class study, we are standing on the threshold of the last half of The Tribulation.
  - B. It's that future chapter of time where things are going to get really bad for a lot of people. When I say, "really bad," I cannot overstate what I am trying to get across.
  - C. It's why Jesus said in **Matthew 24:21** that *"there will be great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equaled again."* In other words, Jesus said things are going to get really bad.
  - D. Things will be so grim and so terrible, in fact, that just a few people will be left when it's all over. Just a few will survive.
  - E. Of those few, there will be even less who are found righteous, those who are in a proper relationship with Jesus Christ.
  - F. This very last group will be part of a '**remnant.**' They will be a subset of a larger group. Their numbers will be few. They will, by all measures of the term, be a minority.
- I. **I want to begin by asking a question: "What is meant by the term, "remnant?"**
- A. The point I most want you to understand is a remnant is a left-over portion from something that was once larger.
  - B. For example, you can have a remnant of your clothes, a piece of your favorite jeans ('holy jeans') that you decide to use as a grease rag. The piece you use as a grease rag is a "remnant."
  - C. You can also have a remnant of a certain population of people, and in this case, the remnant is a smaller group that once was part of a larger group.
  - D. From the world's perspective, something that is a remnant often has little or no worth. However, from God's perspective, a remnant holds high value.
  - E. This is not only true with people, but it is true with the things we do while we are on earth.
    - 1. For example, the Bible tells us in **1 Corinthians 3:12-15** that all our accomplishments in this life will be tested by God.
    - 2. This is known as the Bema Seat Judgment, and all believers will appear there. We will not be judged for our sin because **Romans 8:1** tells us *"There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."*
    - 3. Instead, this Bema Seat Judgment is a test of what we have done for Christ while we lived this life, breathed this air, and walked this planet.
    - 4. It says in this passage that the value of each man's work will become evident, for it's all going to be revealed with fire.

5. It further says that there will be a lot of things we have placed value on in this life which will ultimately be proven worthless. Such accomplishments will be burned up as *“wood, hay, and straw.”*
6. Only the things we have done which are built on a proper and Godly foundation, only those things which hold eternal value, will endure this rigorous inspection.
7. These things are likened to *“gold, silver, and precious stones,”* and they will be a minority of all the things we have done.
8. In other words, they will be a remnant of all our earthly achievements.

F. Throughout the entirety of the Bible, the “theme of the remnant” is woven. From the very beginning of Scriptures to the very end of them, from Genesis to Revelation, there is a constant premise that is underscored, and it shows how God...

1. works through...
2. preserves...
3. saves....
4. and places great value on a ‘remnant’ group of people.

G. Now, one sobering point becomes obvious when we look at the concept of a ‘remnant,’ and it is this: the larger part is discarded. It will be destroyed. It will be forgotten.

1. It is true for the things we accomplish in this life, and it is true for people.
2. If a remnant of people is valued, if a remnant is to be truly saved, this also means many people must be lost.

II. With these things in view, I want us to look at a basic outline of this idea of a ‘remnant.’ I want to look at it from a Biblical point-of-view.

A. It is my hope that each of us gains something from this lesson to evaluate where we are in our own lives. If necessary, also to help us return to and focus on the issues and priorities that matter most.

B. I want to unpack THREE basic points. We don’t have time today for a deep dive, but I think these points will give us a good foundation in understanding the value God places on a ‘remnant.’ Each of these THREE points are collected around a key word that begins with the letter “P,” and they are:

1. The Persecution of the Remnant Past
2. The Peril of the Remnant Present
3. The Perseverance of the Remnant Future

C. **The Persecution of the Remnant Past. I need to make two things clear:**

1. Whenever I refer to a 'remnant' from this point forward, I am talking about that minority group which is in a proper relationship with God. I am talking about those whose standing in God's eyes is a righteous one.
2. By the word 'past,' I mean at all points before our current time, but I am mostly looking at older history, particularly that history which is specified in God's Word.
3. Here is our first important issue to consider: ***A true remnant population is a persecuted population.***
  - a. We will find this truth to be self-evident as we go through each of these four points. The Bible has much to say about the persecution of the remnant.
  - b. This ties directly into the foundational truth of ***2 Timothy 3:12*** which says:

*"Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted,"*

- c. There is a direct connection here and we cannot separate these two elements. If we are part of a Godly remnant, and if we desire to show a right relationship with Jesus Christ, we WILL be persecuted.
4. Elijah, in ***1 Kings Ch. 19***, is a great Old Testament example of this persecution.
  - a. Things had become very corrupt and evil in Israel. Politics, ethics, and morals were upside down. Idolatry had taken over, and Elijah had just taken a very strong public stand for the One True God.
  - b. Also, God had just used Elijah to show His great power and authority. He had worked amazing miracles THROUGH and IN Elijah.
  - c. By every account, we might conclude Elijah would have felt vindicated, victorious, and on top of the world. But instead, he felt very alone, very vulnerable, and very afraid.
  - d. It's worth noting that some of our greatest personal struggles will follow our greatest successes.
    - And it's when we have been used most mightily by God – it's when we have done all the right things - that we often come to a point where we feel most uncertain, most vulnerable, and most afraid.)
  - e. (Back to Elijah): He had done a lot of things well. He had taken a strong national stand for God, and now he was being persecuted by Queen Jezebel, she wanted him dead.
  - f. And so, we read in ***1 Kings 19:3*** that he *"ran for his life."* He became so discouraged that he wanted to die - - and he even prayed to die.
  - g. He complained to God, and he felt alone. He tried to make the point that he'd been uniquely singled out for rough times.

- h. This is where you and I are often like Elijah. We let our feelings and our emotions dominate a much greater truth. We end up complaining because we have abandoned a proper perspective.
- i. Part of Elijah's complaint is found in **vss 10 and 14 of this chapter**. It's in these verses Elijah moaned, *"I am the only one left."*
- j. From Elijah's point of view, there was not even a remnant anymore. He was being heavily persecuted, and in that trial, he imagined he was the last man standing.
- k. But now a beautiful truth emerges in **vs. 18**, and this ties directly into the issue of a remnant. In **vs. 18** God says:

*"Yet I reserve seven thousand in Israel. They are all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and whose mouths have not kissed him."*

- l. In other words, God corrected Elijah's complaints with the truth. The truth was, God had preserved a remnant in Israel. God was still sovereign, and He had sovereignly reserved a remnant for Himself.
  - m. Elijah was not alone as he was tempted to imagine. God had already reserved a remnant for Himself (7000 men), and these were a subset of Israel that still had a right relationship with God.
  - n. Like Elijah, they too were living under persecution. Like Elijah, they too were not going to bend to evil. Like Elijah, they too probably felt alone. They too were part of the persecuted remnant.
5. This idea of a Godly remnant being a persecuted minority was true with the early church as well.
- a. The early church believers were thrown to the lions, burned alive, and subjected to all manners of torture and persecution. Nero reportedly ate banquets by the light of burning Christians.
  - b. **Hebrews 11:35-38** underscores this persecution element with some terrible and sobering details. It says of the Godly remnant:

*"There were others who were tortured, refusing to be released so that they might gain an even better resurrection. Some faced jeers and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were put to death by stoning; they were sawed in two; they were killed by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated—the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, living in caves and in holes in the ground."*

6. **Make no mistake about it.**
- a. Those who actively and deliberately CHOOSE to live Godly in Christ Jesus are the minority. They are the ones who refuse to float downstream with the other dead fish.
  - b. They are not the mainstream crowd. Instead, they are the exceptional group. They are not conventional; they are unconventional.

- c. And it is this group, THIS remnant – that the Bible says WILL suffer persecution. Suffering persecution for the sake of Jesus Christ is in fact a mark of being PART OF the remnant.
- d. It was true in all times past, so it is true now and into all times future.

**D. The Peril of the Remnant Present. With this point, I am now focusing on our present times. I could say so much about the perils that face the Godly remnant right now, but I want to focus on one passage found in *2 Timothy 3:1-5***

NOTE: The bottom line is perilous times will not only come - - but it is clear from this passage they're here now... Here are a few points from these verses for our consideration:

1. This passage in ***2 Timothy 3:1-4*** says that “perilous times” will increase in the “last days.”
  - a. Said another way, the fact that we can see these traits graduating in people now is a direct clue. It is evidence we are living in the last days.
  - b. This passage associates the wicked, difficult, troublesome, and dangerous times we live in now with people who are marked by their depravity and their vices.
  - c. It’s God’s Word plainly telling us how we will KNOW human history is winding down, the evidence for this is people’s evil conduct and evil choices.
  
2. Some of the wicked behaviors this passage lays out are the following things. I am only looking at SOME of the things mentioned in this list that people will become:
  - a. People’s first love will become themselves.
    - This is the start of the downward descent because one cannot be obsessed with themselves without moving God out of the picture.
    - The point is God, and His values and laws, that will cease to become the focus or priority. In fact, such things will be attacked.
    - “Self” reigns instead, and therefore the “me first” mentality takes precedence.
    - It’s all about affirming one’s personal choices and wishes, and that sentiment graduates to a demand that YOU and I must affirm their choices too!
    - Because the “me first” mentality cannot exist where a “God first” focus is given priority instead, the “me first” posture is clearly an ungodly one.
  - b. **People will become covetous.**
    - They will idolize money, riches, wealth, status, and possessions.

- They will do whatever it takes to gain these things because that is what they prioritize.
  - If it means robbing a store, shoplifting dozens of pairs of Nike shoes into a large bag, or sucker-punching a defenseless person to get what you want, then so be it.
  - Increasingly, we see these trends in our time. Presently, I see articles 2-3 times a week about these very issues.
  - Jesus said to beware of being covetous. However, it is easy to see that covetousness is celebrated by many instead.
- c. **People will become boasters.**
- This is not hard to see in our social media-drenched culture.
  - Boasters brag, they seek attention.
  - They always want others to esteem them. And nearly always, this is all about self, stuff, and sin.
  - They elevate themselves, and they promote sensational, shallow, sinful, and depraved things because they embrace pride over humility.
- d. **People will become blasphemers.**
- Let me just cut to the chase on this one: it means the speech and words of these folks are directed AGAINST God.
  - To be blasphemous is to be impious, to be irreverent, to speak evil of God, and to openly berate God's standards and laws. They will also put down anyone who supports what is good and proper.
  - These people say such things in an attempt to justify their own disobedience, depravity, and disrespect.
- e. **People will become disobedient to parents.**
- Really, this is a core issue here is one of disrespect to those in authority.
  - Such folks cannot be persuaded that they are in the wrong. It's always someone else's fault.
  - These people refuse to be compliant with proper governing structures. They want to defund the police and they want to remove any consequence for violating national borders.
  - They advance a two-tiered justice system because real laws don't matter to them. In fact, any authority or any law is an inconvenience to their ambitions.
  - When a society is all about "self," when God is removed from His proper place, this "disobedience" is a natural by-product.
- f. **People will become slanderers.**
- Some translations say, "false accusers," and the Greek term: "diaboloi" shares a relationship with "diabolical" or "devil."

- These people are like the devil, who is the “father of lies” (*Cf. John 8:44*).
  - The point is they have no hesitations in talking badly about other people. They have little or no regard for the truth, or for tearing down names and reputations.
  - In fact, truth in all its forms, is inconvenient for these slanderers because truth by its very nature requires personal accountability, and that’s not what they want.
- g. **People will become incontinent.**
- Yes, this description shares a connection with the medical condition where people cannot control their bladder. They lack self-control.
  - Here, similarly, these folks lack temperance, prudence, and self-control. It means they are completely without responsible inhibitions; they are unrestrained.
  - They do not conform to proper code of conduct, but instead they do whatever they want, whenever they want, however they want, wherever they want, and with whomever they want.
  - They have no self-control. By the Bible’s definition, they are incontinent.
- h. **People will become despisers of those that are good.**
- I cannot sugarcoat this; it means exactly what it says.
  - Such folks are hostile to anything or anyone virtuous, proper, moral, righteous, lawful, and yes, “good.”
  - They despise being good, and they hate anyone who is!
  - *Isaiah 5:20* says, “Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!”
  - In our culture today where “up is down” and “right is wrong,” the Bible is clear that purveyors of such misconduct will be judged.

NOTE: I’ve only scratched the surface of this expressive passage in **2 Timothy 3:1-4**. However, two things are clear: (1.) the last days are here, and (2.) one needs to look no further than mankind’s evil conduct to know this.

- i. Let me wrap up this point about **The Peril of the Remnant Present** by emphasizing the great danger, or “peril,” about taking any of these issues casually:
- j. These are times in which we need to consciously and deliberately evaluate the integrity of our faith.
  - *Matthew 7:14* says, “But small is the gate and narrow is the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.”

- By all Biblical definitions of “a few,” this is speaking of a remnant. It is not the larger population; it is the smaller minority that will gain eternal life.
- This fact is affirmed from the opposite perspective in that same chapter. In **Matthew 7:22-23**, it says “...many (on that day) will be told by Jesus: ‘Depart from me....I never knew you.’”
- This is the opposite of a remnant. This is the larger group from which the remnant is extracted. This is the bell curve, the majority. I’m quite convinced it describes most people in most churches today.
- We need to seriously evaluate the integrity of our faith that is reflected in the choices we make and the things we want to believe.

#### E. The Perseverance of the Remnant Future.

1. Looking ahead, persecutions will become worse. So will perils. Everything that the Godly remnant has endured up to this point is going to get a whole lot worse.
2. And that’s why we read in **Revelation 14:12**, “*Here is the perseverance of the saints who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus.*”
  - a. This verse is concerning the time known as The Great Tribulation. It’s the timeframe we are preparing to study starting next week. It’s that 3 ½ years of history that Jesus spoke of when He said, “*there will be great distress, unequalled from the beginning of the world until now, and never to be equaled again.*”
  - k. It should be no surprise that a key attribute of the saints of those last 3 ½ years will be one of “perseverance.” Some translations put it as “*patient endurance.*”
    - Both phrases are saying the same thing: Things will become so very bad in the future for the Godly remnant that they will be stripped down to basic coping skills just to make it.
    - And key to their ability to “hang in there” will be their “*perseverance and endurance.*” The odds are profoundly against basic survival, and anyone who cannot cope with the unprecedented challenges is very unlikely to make it.
  - l. This is all by God’s sovereign design. There is no loss of control on His part through this horrific times. As it was in times past and present, persecution and peril will only escalate.
  - m. The Bible says in **Revelation 13:7** that the antichrist will be “*...permitted to wage war against the saints and to conquer them.*”



- n. In **Daniel 7:25** it says the antichrist will “...wear out the saints.” Both verses make the same point. The Godly remnant of the future will need to “persevere.”

F. **I want to conclude by touching on one last point: It’s one I did not mention before, but here it is, “The Promise of all the Remnant.”** For you and I, what should be our attitude and our perspective right now?

1. One thing is clear from this lesson, it’s hard to be part of the Godly remnant, and hardship will be our portion if we are.
  - a. Hardships come in a variety of ways: various setbacks and temptations, illnesses and medical problems, lost jobs, dysfunctional and broken relationships, persecution for standing up for one’s faith, attacks of various sorts, rejection, and financial turmoil, are all forms of hardship. (There are many other things I could add here.)
  - b. We need to firmly remind ourselves that as believers, as part of a remnant, we should not be taken by surprise when these sorts of trials and challenges come.
  - c. Jesus warned us in **John 16:33**, “*In this world you will have trouble.*” The idea of experiencing trials and troubles is an issue **James 1:2-8** says we should count on. It’s guaranteed to happen.
  - d. However, Jesus followed up His warning in **John 16:33** with a word of encouragement. He said, “*But take heart! I have overcome the world.*”
  - e. It does not matter what we are facing in this life, we can endure and overcome by His grace.
  - f. This endurance permits the true remnant believer to withstand persecution, to face perils of all sorts, and to persevere against all odds.
  - g. In fact, THIS endurance IS the mark of a true remnant believer.
2. Our greatest hope and our greatest promise lies in the soon appearing of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.
  - a. **Titus 2:13** says, “*While we wait for the blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.*”
  - b. We are not looking to earth as our only home. In fact, we were created for future glory. We should be eagerly awaiting the Rapture, our “blessed hope” as the segue into our future and eternal promises.
  - c. Hope in the return of Christ therefore becomes the basis for believers to purify themselves, to endure, to face persecutions and perils in this life, and to persevere when times get really tough.