



Old Testament Reading: Daniel 2:1-23

New Testament Reading: 1 Corinthians 15:50-58

**“A Call for Courage”**  
**1 Peter 2:9-17**

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The timeless truth of this letter is that those who believe the gospel and receive Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord, will be persecuted by those who do not.

- Such persecution often begins with verbal assaults, mockings, slander, shunning, and physical violence from unbelievers, and in at least 17 countries today, false arrests, slavery, and martyrdom by the government.
- The key verse in the epistle of 1<sup>st</sup> Peter is 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 2:21, where the Apostle told those 1<sup>st</sup> century Christians: *“To this [suffering] you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might*

*follow in His steps.”*

- Just as the Lord Jesus suffered and died to establish the gospel, those who believe it and receive Him as their Savior and Lord must be willing to suffer to defend it.

***“The Soul of America is at stake” in Tuesday’s election because the values and principles that secured this country’s greatness are being threatened. America faces a critical situation today. Our secular society has mounted the most aggressive attack on our moral values in America’s history. Issues rooted in the Bible have now become political topics. In this election, we face many such issues, and critical moral decisions that will shape the days ahead. As Christians, we carry a dual responsibility to the state and to God, and we cannot afford to neglect either one. The only thing that can change the direction of our country is a revival of biblical proportions and a return to the moral and spiritual principles of Scripture in which our greatness is rooted. Your participation in this election is a way to demonstrate your Christian values in a tangible way.” – Dr. David Jeremiah***

According to George Barna, Director of the Cultural Research Center of Arizona Christian University, 104 million people of faith are unlikely to vote in Tuesday’s election; 32 million of those are self-identified Christians who are actively involved in their local churches. The reasons listed:

- Not interested in politics.
- Not impressed with either presidential candidate.
- Don’t have the time to wait in line.
- Don’t think my vote would make any difference.
- Political candidates never keep their promises.

Biblically speaking, sins of “omission” are just as serious as sins of “commission,” for what we fail to do when we should is just as sinful as what we do when we should not. ***“To him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin.”*** – James 4:17

- Therefore, in view of the critical nature of this year’s election and the moral values that will be determined by the outcome, **apathy is not an option for a biblical Christian.**
- **“Silence in the face of evil is evil itself: God will not hold us guiltless. Not to speak is to speak. Not to act is to act.”** – Dietrich Bonhoeffer
- Unless Christians speak up, America will soon be immersed in socialism, and our grandchildren will grow up in communism.
- Unless Christians speak up, the “Confessing Church” will soon be silenced, not by decree, but by default.

In Matthew 24:48-51, Jesus said the closer we get to the last days of the church age, the more God’s people will lose their courage as they see the disturbing events of the world, and many will turn from their true faith in God’s promise, and find peace through their appeasement with the world.

## **1. The Fall from Courage – 2 Peter 3:3-4: *“Knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, “Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation.”***

The two main reasons why Christians have lost their sense of urgency about the rapture of the Church, the return of Jesus Christ, and their responsibility to share the gospel:

- **They are not hearing it from their pulpits** – today’s pastors are more concerned about building their kingdoms than in their assignment to preach the whole counsel of the Word of God.
  - According to Lifeway Research, 25% of today’s senior pastors do not believe in the literal, physical rapture of the Church.
  - How we view the “end times” reflects how we view God, how we understand His Word, and how we live our lives each day.
  - Christians in the 1<sup>st</sup> century lived in an Antichristian society, but they lived their lives in such a way as to lead others to see their need for a Savior and Jesus Christ as the Savior they needed.
  - They lived each day in the glorious expectation of the Lord’s call to ***“Come up here.”*** 4:1
- **They are so preoccupied with the pursuit of personal pleasures they don’t have time to see the events of each day through their study of the Holy Scriptures.**
  - Anything we put before God is an idol, and an idol is a false god. When our desire to achieve worldly goals exceeds our desire to learn the truth of God’s Word or to teach others, we are in danger of leaving our first love for the Lord Jesus.
  - In Mark 13:32-37, Jesus gave His disciples a one-word warning regarding the end times: ***“Watch, take heed, watch and pray, for you do not know when the time is, watch, lest coming suddenly, he finds you sleeping, and what I say to you, I say to all WATCH!”***

## **2. The Call to Courage – 1 Corinthians 15:34 – *“Awake to righteousness, and do not sin; for some do not have the knowledge of God. I speak this to your shame.”***

- In John 9:4, Jesus warned His disciples that the day would come when it would be illegal to share the gospel, and such is the case in 17 nations around the world – the darkness of socialism and communism has all but snuffed out the light of the gospel.
- In Luke 19:11-27, Jesus told the “parable of the pounds” to illustrate what it will be like when every Christian will stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ to give an account of how we used the gifts and abilities He entrusted to us.
- Those who used what God gave to them for His glory will be rewarded, but those who cowered in fear will lose their reward.

The call to courage is to live as God’s people in this ungodly world until Jesus comes again. Therefore, regardless of how ungodly it gets or how hard it is to live for Christ in an Anti-Christian society, Christians are to be: ***“Steadfast,***

***immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.”***<sup>1</sup>

Cor.15:57-58

- ***“Steadfast”*** – to be established, settled, resolute, resolved, firm in our faith, as well as the expression of our faith, not fearing the consequences, for regardless of what happens to us in this world, because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, we can face the future.
  - Not only do we understand what is happening today, we know what is going to happen in the future and why.
  - Therefore, we are not troubled: we are like the men of Issachar, who knew the times and what the nation of Israel should do.
  
- ***“Unmovable”*** – nothing can shake our faith in the finished work of Christ, or dampen our hope for His soon return.
  - As disciples of Christ, we see this world as our mission field, and we must not forsake our responsibility to make disciples, even if, in doing so, we must suffer persecution.
  
- ***“Always Abounding in the work of the Lord”*** – realizing the only reason God has left us on this earth is to finish the work He has called us to do for His glory.
  - As those who have been “bought” with the blood of Christ, we are not our own – our time is not ours – we need to live each day ready to stand before the Lord...