

Hearts of Love

Tom & Debbie Tillman "to touch the world for Jesus Christ"

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Like Simeon and Anna... (and Jacob)

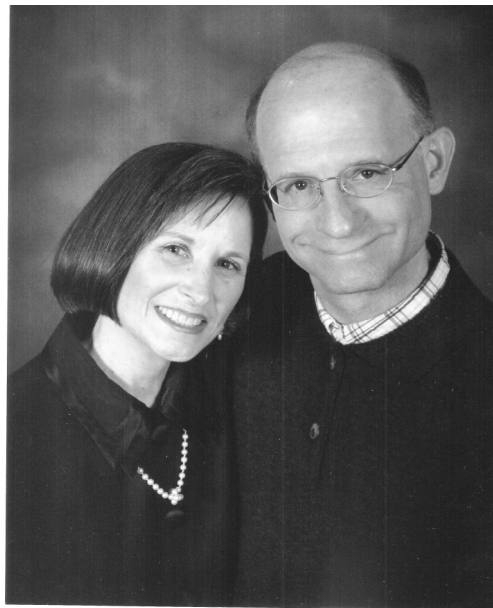
During the December runup to Christmas, Debbie and I performed a little vignette, one Sunday morning, in which we spoke as if Simeon and Anna, from Luke 2. Both Simeon and Anna, we're told, they were very old; the Holy Spirit had revealed to each of them that they would both see God's promised redeemer, before they died, the newly born Lord Jesus Christ. We're not told how old Simeon was but we can easily calculate that Anna was about 106 years old. They had both waited, looking for the Savior, hopefully and patiently, for many long years.

Upon raising the infant up toward God, Simeon said, 'Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: ³⁰For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, ³¹Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; ³²A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.' Now, Simeon could die in peace. We're not given any of Anna's words, except: 'And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.'

People growing old, looking for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ; does any of that seem familiar? It certainly is to us. Debbie and I were married more than 50 years ago. Hal Lindsey's book, The Late, Great Planet Earth, came out in 1970; we were both 17. I'm not sure when I read it but that was what began to open my eyes to the truth of God's Word, regarding the End Times, that we are the final generation of which the Lord Jesus Christ told His disciples would not pass away until all things were completed leading up to His return at Armageddon, when He will come again, physically, down to Jerusalem to establish His 1000 year Kingdom on Earth during which we, the True Church, the Body and Bride of the Lord Jesus Christ will rule and reign with Him: first, for 1000 years and then forever over His newly recreated Heavens and Earth.

When He returns, at that time, the World will have experienced the worst 7 years of its long history; that 7 years is called The Tribulation. Just before it begins, the Lord Jesus Christ will come down, only as far as the clouds, to call all of His True Church up to Himself in what is called the Rapture. Yes, I know, the name, the Rapture, is not found in our English Bibles but it's there, nonetheless. When Paul wrote: 'For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: ¹⁷Then we which are alive and remain shall **be caught up** together with them in the clouds, **to meet the Lord in the air**: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.', the Greek word he used for 'caught up,' is harpazo. When the Bible was translated into Latin, that word became, rapturo. Harpazo and rapturo mean: to seize, to snatch away by force; that is the root of our English word: raptor: eagles, hawks, owls: birds that seize their prey, by force, and carry it away. From that Latin word, we get our term: the Rapture. Obviously, the Rapture is clearly taught in Scripture! Anyone who denies it, either refuses to see it or they willingly reject it but it is, nevertheless, right there in black and white.

I have believed in, waited, and looked for the Lord Jesus Christ's coming for us, in the Rapture, for more than 50 years. At 70 years old, sometimes I begin to feel old; pain and weakness become more and more familiar. Every year, every month, every day, even every minute: I try to remind myself, 'His coming could be at any moment!', especially as I look out over the World, recognizing how evil our rulers have become; they always have been but, now, they don't bother to hide it; they proudly proclaim their evil plans and their seething hatred for God's people: True Christians and Jews, people whom God has cho-



*He has committed to
us the word of
Reconciliation.
Therefore, we are
Ambassadors for Christ.*

2 Corinthians 5:19,20

sen for Himself. They hate the God of the Bible; they refuse to submit to Him and His Word. They actually believe that they, under their king, Lucifer/Satan, can one day defeat the Lord Jesus Christ, Whom they believe was already defeated, 2000 years ago. When Jacob was born, he was the second twin; he came out holding his brother, Esau's heel. His name means, heel-holder or, supplanter. Supplant means to usurp the place of, especially through intrigue or underhanded tactics.

In his early life, Jacob was a deceiver but then, while on his way to Padanaram, to his uncle's home where he would find his wives, he camped in what became Bethel. In a dream, God met him and blessed him, promising to keep him. 20 years later, having become wealthy in family and livestock, fearing Esau, he camped alone one night: *'And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a Man with him until the breaking of the day. 25 And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him. 26 And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me. 27 And he said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob. 28 And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed. 29 And Jacob asked him, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, thy name. And he said, Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there. 30 And*

Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.' Gen 32
 Jacob was, in reality, wrestling with the Lord Jesus Christ Who obviously allowed Jacob to hold on, in the same way a grandfather wrestles with his small grandchild and allows him to prevail. This is the apex of Jacob's earthly life. He encounters God, Who changes his name from 'supplanter' to 'Prince of God.' One Sunday night, on the radio, I stated, to much pushback, that 'God causes our trials.' To understand that truth, we must understand God's purpose in trials: Jacob wrestles with God; God isolated him; Jacob held on to God, never letting go. In every trial, God isolates us; every trial is a wrestling match with God. If we hold on to God throughout, we will have passed through the trial, prevailing like a prince of God which is, in fact, what we really are; every child of God is a prince or princess in waiting; we are being trained and prepared to eventually rule and reign with the Lord Jesus Christ forever. *'...let us run with patience the race that is set before us, 2 Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.'* Heb 12:1

Jesus was crucified according to God's perfect will. If we don't understand that foundational fact, we understand nothing of God's revelation of Himself through His

Word, through His Son. Jesus saw, by faith, the reward set before Him and He was willing to endure that horrific trial. We were the reward set before Him! Now, our reward is set before us, and that reward should cause us to patiently endure every trial; He is our reward! Looking unto Jesus! How do we run with patience? He gives us trials to produce patience, in us, in order to endure trials, over and over again; He is perfecting us and refining us as gold is refined in the furnace; He loves us and He guards us through every trial; *'For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.'* Philp 2:13

'My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. 4 But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.' James 1:2

Who sets out our personal race before us? God set out our individual race, even before we were born, every day and every minute. *'The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and he delighteth in his way.'* Psalm 37:23

'Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.' Jer 1:5

Either we believe that God is Sovereign or that He is not. Sort of sovereign is no sovereignty at all... He is! Either God is in complete control of all things or He is not... He is! We cannot say that Satan is in control of some things if God is in control of all things. Just as Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar were tools in God's hands to accomplish His Will, so, too, is Lucifer, who is nothing more than an angel created by God and this verse is as true for Lucifer as it is for Man: *"For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."* Isaiah 55:9

Job makes perfectly clear that nothing happens to us but only that which is filtered through God's loving and protective fingers. God caused that trial for Jacob... even and especially, his hip being put out of joint, by God, for the rest of his life. Every trial God puts before us holds an unimaginable eternal blessing to be either gained or lost. If we hold fast to God, through-out the trial, we will prevail. I don't mean money, health, etc... the prostitutes of televangelism have

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created a generation of mercenary supposed 'christians' who believe such gross triviality. God's blessing is eternal: *'But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.'* 1Cor. 2:9

In every trial, God's will is that we set our focus on Him and on things eternal; in so doing, we can bear up under the trial and, so, grow in Him, as ever more purified gold. *'run with patience, the race that is set before us...'* How do we develop that patience?

'Consider it all joy, my brothers, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance (patience).' James 1:2 We can have joy and patience in the trial, knowing that God is doing this for my good: *'For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.'* Philippians 2:13

'I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.' Isa 46:9

'... seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.' Col 3:1

'For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.' 2Cor 4:17

If we can settle in our minds that every trial comes through God's loving hand, then we can always be assured that He is in complete control: *'I will never leave you or forsake you!'* Heb 13:5

If we can be led to believe that Lucifer has the power to do anything to us, apart from God's will, then we can be led to believe that God is not in complete control of us and our day to day lives. When His Word says, *'Be sober, because your adversary the devil, prowls about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour'* 1Pet 5:8, it's not saying he can devour us; a roaring lion terrorizes his prey to run toward the waiting lions who will pounce; if we believe his roaring lies, we will doubt God's love and protection over us.

Every Day, as we await His appearance, in the clouds, to call us home, we are beset by trials of every kind; some seem small while others seem large and insurmountable but every trial is according to God's will and if we hold fast to Him, like Jacob did, we will prevail in the trial, we will have gained a new measure of Godly patience, and we will have become that much more refined, like gold, to be more ready to step into that special office of authority He has planned for us to fill during His Millennial Kingdom on Earth. If we keep that goal before our spiritual eyes, we will be able to bear up under any and all trials set before us so that we can run the race that He has set before us, running with patience and endurance until He comes for us in the Rapture.

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The false teachers of today tell us that God's will is for us to be healthy and wealthy which, they say, is the proof of God's favor ... 'so be sure to dig deep and send me all your money so that God will be able to bless you like He does me!' P.T. Barnum, father of the modern circus, said, 'There's a sucker born every minute.' Little wonder, then, that so many churches, today, are little different than 3-ring circuses.

Jesus said, *'These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.'* John 16:33

Health and wealth do not produce patience or peace. God's trials and His Spirit bring love, joy, peace, patience, etc, etc, etc. As Simeon and Anna grew older, the trials of old age increased but they faithfully persevered. Finally, Jesus Christ came. Soon, our faith will be rewarded; He will come!

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The Harvest is Great, but the laborers are few. Matt 9:38

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