

From the Desk of Tom Nelson:

Alone, Exhausted, Victorious

There is a sobering reality that every minister must come to grips with. The reality is that we are going to lose. That statement obviously needs qualification. We will ultimately victor upon the return of Christ, our conquering King. The church will succeed in its divine purpose of saving out the elect of God. "All the Father gives to me will come to me."

But in spite of these providential and ultimate victories and even the astounding good within civilization that the church of Christ has been –

We are not going to bring in God's kingdom.

As an athlete, I was always aware of the finality of victory. The ninth inning. The buzzer. The clock running down to "00.00." The fourth quarter. The tape. Always a finish. Always the victory. Always a celebration....Only not in the most important race. To the end of the age and to the end of my life, darkness will rule this domain of Satan. In the church there will continue to be compromises and errors and unholy alliances with the world. Time will always erode. Younger men will always depart from the ancient paths. Just as today the great saints of the past are forgotten, so anything that we accomplish will give way to the weeds of time. John Walvoord, a former president of Dallas seminary, once said that the life expectancy of a seminary is but 40 years. Time and less impassioned participants allow for the inevitable encroachments of error. I have no guarantee that Denton Bible will fare any better than any other institution even though my prayer is for coming young men who will hold to the ancient truths.

But "evil men and imposters will proceed from bad to worse" 2 Timothy 3:13

"The apostasy will come first" 2 Thessalonians 2:3

"The time will come that men will not endure sound doctrine" 2 Timothy 4:3

"The Spirit explicitly says that in the latter days men will fall away from the faith" 1 Timothy 4:1

"Mockers will come" 2 Peter 3:3

No matter how pre-mil a minister might be, he still tends to labor like a post-mil who believes that he will usher in a kingdom of the church. There is something in him that hopes that maybe – just maybe – He will turn it all around. But alas, time and humanity will dash that hope.

So what is our ultimate purpose? It is to hold back the night. To hold the fort. To live and preach the truth of God in our dark and dead world. To serve as the voice of the Lord calling out His elect. We are to do good in an unkind and unloving world and leaven it with our light and salt. We are to fight on and hold fast and suffer and secure the position where Providence has placed us. We hold back the night. We create hostels of joy and true culture in this war zone. And all the time we're looking for the coming of our Great King who will then impose His will upon a rogue world and rule with a rod of iron.

Until then we are Robin Hoods.

A wicked usurper, John, had commandeered Nottingham, but Robin rebels against his evil, seeks to undo the wrongs John has done and preaches revolt. He collects disciples about himself who live apart in Sherwood. "Merry men." Merry not because their lives are easy, but because they are in the right. And they will ultimately win. Richard will return from his Crusade, evil will be vanquished and right established. And so he fights on.

There is a glory in Paul the aged...spent...in prison...renounced by his nation...threatening to an empire, awaiting death, forsaken by the frightened of his own faith, who says "I am poured out... The time of death has come. I have fought...kept the faith, finished. And I'm going home."

We fight on. Like Reepicheep in unfailing zeal. As John Dunbar at his one-man post. As Don Quixote charging alone against his rising modern day. It is Vince Lombardi's interpretation of living – "to lie exhausted in victory on the field of battle." It is no wonder we do not go through the Tribulation. Our trial is now.

Fight on.