

LESSON 13

**EXCEPT YE HOLD STEADFAST**

Scripture Texts: 1 Peter 5:8-10; Matthew 24:9-13; Luke 9:62; Hebrews 3:14; James 1:12; 2 Timothy 1:13-14

In our lesson today we will learn that God will have a tried people, tested and proven qualified for His purposes. He does not promise to spare us from suffering or persecution (2 Timothy 3:12). He will send a shaking time. We shall find that it is possible for a person once saved to be lost afterward and go to hell. The man not fit for the kingdom had put his hand to the plow, but he looked back. Jesus said the love of many shall wax cold. We find that there are many conditional promises in our lesson Scriptures.

There is courage and strength to be gained from knowing of others' sufferings and persecutions, their successes or failures.

MEMORY VERSE: *"For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end."*

Hebrews 3:14

The Battle

The moment we are saved, we place ourselves upon the battlefield for Christ. We declare war on Satan and his forces. First Peter 5:8-10 tells us that the devil and his servants are set for the turning back of EVERY child of God. He walketh about. In other words, he is present everywhere, ready to deceive and trip us unexpectedly. In this world we are never free from the liability of temptation. If we yield, we are lost.

There is but one defense in this spiritual battle—God. We are to *resist*, to be sober and vigilant, ever watchful. One must always beware of trusting in his own strength (1 Corinthians 10:12). Resistance must be in the faith, in the God of all grace. We must take our stand and make a start, then God will come with His strength. Keep steadfast, trust in Him, and He will make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, and settle you. This is God's way to bring you out of the temptation stronger in Christ than before.

After reading Matthew 24:9-13, can anyone doubt that the Christian life is a battle? Some shall survive true to Christ, but *many* will be offended, turned aside, shall betray and hate one another. The love of many shall wax cold. Many will be deceived by false teachings.

Jesus said many false prophets would arise. Do we have any now? These are not honest Christian brethren who see some points of belief differently than other brothers do. These are deliberate opposers of Jesus Christ. To follow them is to be deceived, or led into darkness. Such are any disbelievers in Christ and the Bible posing as Christian ministers who teach doctrines that will keep one from life in Christ. God's Word tells us how we can keep ourselves free and help protect others from deceptive teachings (Matthew 7:15-20; 2 Timothy 4:3-4; 2 Peter 2:1-2; and 2 John 1:7-11).

The battle is not reserved for some future time, it is happening now. Over one-third of earth's people now live under Communism, whose purpose is to stamp out Christianity. Christians there experience opposition, hardship, suffering, prison, torture, and death.

The battle is spiritual. Thus, carnal weapons will not gain us victory. The devil has many methods of turning us from Christ. One is the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches that we read of in Matthew 13:22. James 1:12 speaks of the crown of life. *Crowns* imply victory, honor, power, and authority. This is an incorruptible crown. It is for those who endure faithfully. It is eternal life in Christ Jesus.

Strength to Overcome

2 Timothy 1:13-14—These verses outline requirements for holding true to Christ. Two instructions cover it. (1) Hold fast the form of sound words. We must study, heed, love, and obey God's Word. The way we obey is through faith and love, which are by Christ Jesus. Not our own failing human striving, but by that faith and love that Jesus brings into our hearts. (2) That good thing . . . keep by the Holy Ghost. The good thing is the life received from God when He saved us.

The Holy Spirit will guide so as to keep our union with God strong. He is the greatest safeguard we have. Obey Him. "Not to the strong is the battle, Not to the swift is the race. Yet to the true and the faithful Victory is promised through grace."

JUST A THOUGHT

**"It's a lot more fun to stop adding up your troubles,
and turn to counting your blessings."**