

Essay: The Clocked Stopped and the Whole World Changed

Sometimes, while out and about, you hear something that grabs your attention. I recently heard an elderly lady remembering a certain event in her life. One of the things she said about it was arresting: "The clock stopped and the whole world changed." She was speaking about sinking of the *Iolaire* off the Isle of Lewis in Scotland's Outer Hebrides, which remains to this day the second-largest loss of life at sea involving a British ship.

Iolaire was carrying sailors, mostly Lewis islanders who had fought in World War I, back to the Scottish island. She left the mainland port of Kyle of Lochalsh late on December 31, 1918. But at 2:30 AM on New Year's Day, as the ship approached Stornoway, not far offshore and a mile from the safety of Stornoway Harbor, she struck the infamous rocks, "The Beasts of Holm," and eventually sank. Two hundred and five people lost their lives.

The woman recalled feeling her grandfather's tears falling onto her face as they absorbed the enormity of the tragedy. This life-changing event affected every person on the Isle of Lewis, a trial that cut to the core of the islanders' souls. In the blink of an eye, their lives turned upside down. As she said, the clock stopped and their whole world changed.

Trials come in many forms, and when we are shaken by a big one—when the clock stops and the whole world changes for us—what is our response? Of course, the best response is to stand fast in our faith in the face of a fiery trial. How do we do this? Why should we do it?

In short, we should stand fast because God's Word says that a bigger and brighter future awaits all mankind, and if we want to experience it, we need to endure to the end. But the following three points will help us answer these questions more fully.

First, we must realize that trials are par for the course. Paul tells us in I Corinthians 10:13, "No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it."

Trials and adversities come in many shapes and sizes, and called out of this world or not, we, as flesh-and-blood human beings the world over, have experienced, are experiencing, and will experience again—right to the finish line—all kinds of difficulties. It is called "life." But when life smacks us hard on the head, do we stay on the path? God promises that He will make a way of escape.

When the Israelites were fleeing Egyptian slavery, a way of escape was made in the form of a pillar of cloud and fire, and it was the Lord, Jesus Christ, who was in that cloud and fire. All they had to do was to follow it. God made a way of escape then, and He makes one today. Jesus is called the Truth and Life, but He is also called the Way (John 14:6). Our responsibility is to follow that Way. As the Israelites were called out of Egypt, we have been called out of the world, and knowing, believing, and understanding that truth means developing a relationship with Christ and following Him.

Second, many have gone before us and suffered trials. Notice Hebrews 12:1-2:

Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 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 has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Many have gone before us, doing their best to follow Christ's example. We, like them, must follow with endurance. It is not only the big trials that may hinder us, but we also stumble because of our inherent, human weaknesses, which we think we have conquered, but from time to time they rear their ugly heads.

What sin easily ensnares us? What is our spiritual Achilles' heel, so to speak?

The apostle Paul, in his letter to the Ephesians, describes the spiritual armor that we need to withstand Satan and his devices. Notice one in particular in Ephesians 6:15: ". . . and having shod your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace." To the Roman soldier, boots were very important. Unlike other parts of his armor, they were used every day, and in battle they took on an even greater role. The boots' soles were studded to provide grip in whatever terrain they found

themselves in. In our spiritual battle, we also need "boots" to stop us slipping, and when the going gets tough, we dig in.

Third, we know we should stand fast because we have hope. When we understand and truly believe, we soon realize that God's way is the *only* hope of all humanity. Our hope and desire is to endure and enter the Kingdom of God, and for our fellow man, family and loved ones not yet called, we have the hope of their resurrection and eternal life in God's Kingdom.

Paul speaks of this hope in Titus 1:2, writing of our "hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began." This wonderful future is part of His plan, and our God of joy does not and cannot lie. Our hope is a sure hope!

We hope that all will embrace God's way when they are finally shown it for the first time. This way works. Their way does not. We look forward, hoping that Satan will be bound soon. We hope for the healing of the world—a world not influenced by Satan, a world restored! No disease, crime, poverty, hunger—all the world's ills and all the ugliness that we humans create shall be wiped clean!

But the path that we travel is narrow (Matthew 7:13-14). We have slipped, stumbled, and fallen from time to time, but we are still on the path because we believe in the hope that God has for us. So, we keep our minds on the coming Kingdom of God and focus on the big picture and on His promises for all mankind.

As physical beings, we are subject to the highs and lows that come with being so. But the God who has called us to a greater understanding has not called us to fail. Our minds have been opened, and a way of escape has been offered to us. God has given us the spiritual boots we need to dig in when times get tough. We have the examples of many who have gone before us—people we have known, those we know through the Scriptures, and ultimately, Jesus Christ, who had the most severe trial of all yet stood fast until the bitter end.

One day soon the clock will stop, and the whole world will be changed. That is a day we can all look forward to with confidence because we have been given the eyes to see it properly. When it comes, the world will be changed for the good, changed for the better, and changed forever.

- Gary Monks