

## **Brace For Impact Part 5**

We are bringing this series of messages to a close this morning. We started the first of February focusing on the theme, "Brace for Impact." Last Sunday I told you I had sensed the Lord speaking three different things into my heart concerning this theme of bracing for impact. The first was preparing to stand against the enemy and the evil days. We talked about bracing for the impact that comes as the devil tries to defeat and discourage the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. We talked about arming ourselves with the whole armor of God, engaging the enemy of our soul with the sword of the Spirit and utilizing the power of prayer as we stand in the mighty power of God.

Last Sunday we talked about another type of impact as we focused on recognizing the impact our lives were making upon others. I said then we must brace ourselves and prepare ourselves for making an eternal impact upon others. Someone will either be in heaven or hell because of your influence. You have the power to make that decision by your life and your choices.

This morning as we bring the series to a close I want to once again urge you to brace for impact. There are a series of events that are impending upon this planet and it is urgent, it is absolutely necessary that you be prepared for the impact of these events. We are coming to the end of days and we need to brace for impact as God brings things to a close.

I realize there are many different ways to understand and interpret the Scriptures concerning the end times. There are a number of ways to view it and different ways to order or arrange some of the key events, but I want to mention three things for which I'm certain, three things for which we need to be prepared and to brace for their impact. And then I want to mention three ways in which we should respond, three ways we brace for the final impact.

### **Three things for which we should brace for impact.**

**Rough times.** In the first message of this series we pointed out the fact that we would be facing "evil days." The Bible says, "**But mark this: there will be terrible times in the last days.**" **2 Timothy 3:1.** The church cannot afford to ignore such biblical warnings. We must brace for the impact that is coming. What we are experiencing and seeing now in the world is just the beginning of the difficult days of the

end times. When the disciples asked Jesus, **“What will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?”** Jesus answered: **‘Watch out that no one deceives you. For many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many. You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of birth pains.’**  
**Matthew 24:3-8.**

The bible uses words like distress, anguish, terror, dismay, perplexity, wrath, tribulation, trouble to describe the end of days. Is it possible we are living in the days that Jesus described as “the beginning of birth pains”? I believe it is and we had better brace for impact. These evil days, these days accompanying the end times are going to be rough for everyone on this planet. These are the beginning of the birth pains, Jesus said and regardless of where you place the rapture or the tribulation period in your theology of the end times, everything points to rough times as we approach the Lord’s return. We must brace for impact and prepare to stand our ground in faith.

In Luke’s gospel, reading from the New American Standard Bible, Jesus said, **“And there will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and upon the earth dismay among nations, in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves, men fainting from fear [their hearts failing from the alarm and fear the days will bring] and the expectation of the things which are coming upon the world; for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. But when these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”**  
**Luke 21:25-28**

The church used to warn people that there were evil days coming, days that would bring fear and alarm. Natural disasters, persecution would be heightened, believers would be betrayed, but we didn’t like the sound of it. No one wanted to think about rough times. No one wanted to consider what might happen to the church as the beginning of the birth pains begin.

I don’t know what all will take place, but I know this. The times will be difficult

and will grow more difficult as we approach the coming of the Lord and the end of days. So what must we do? Jesus told us to brace for impact. Jesus said we must, **“Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you unexpectedly like a trap. For it will come upon all those who live on the face of the whole earth. Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man.” Luke 21:34-36**

Brace for impact. Watch. Pray. Be aware of the signs. Get ready. There are rough days ahead. But don't panic. Watch and pray. Remember what Jesus said. **“When you see these things happening, you know that the kingdom of God is near.” Luke 21:31.** Remember that Jesus said not to let your heart be troubled or to be afraid. These things shouldn't frighten us. These are the signs that point to the Lord's imminent return. Don't be frightened. Be encouraged! There are rough days ahead, yes, but the Lord is with us. There are rough days ahead, but those rough days are the prelude to the two glorious events that follow. We are to brace for rough days.

The second thing we are to brace for is **Resurrection**. The rough days are followed by resurrection. You may not be certain about all of the end time events and what order they will all happen, but you can be assured of this, there will be a resurrection. 1 Corinthians 15 tells us if Christ has not been raised from the dead then our faith is futile, worthless, and those who have died already are just lost to us. But the bible declares this good news for all of us, **“Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man.” 1 Corinthians 15:20-21**

Turn with me to 1 Thessalonians 4:13 and let's look at what the bible has to say about this time of resurrection. **“Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will**

**come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage each other with these words.” 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18**

Paul is telling us about the resurrection that will occur for all those who have placed their faith in Christ as their Savior and Lord. Those who have died “in Christ” will be raised to eternal life in him and with him. There will be another resurrection of those who died without receiving Christ as their savior and lord. They will be resurrected to stand before God’s judgment and when their name is not found in the Lamb’s Book of Life, they will be sentenced to eternity in hell.

You can be certain there is a resurrection coming. All who have died will rise again, either to eternal joy with God in heaven or eternal separation from God with the devil in hell.

Look at Paul’s instruction to us. He didn’t want us to be uninformed. Jesus died and rose again and so we know there is a resurrection ahead for all who have died in the Lord. Paul says the dead in Christ will rise first as the Lord gives that loud command, a command that I think will only be heard by those who have served him and followed him, those who trained their ear to listen to the voice of their Lord and Savior. A loud command, the voice of the archangel and the trumpet call of God will be issued and then the dead in Christ will rise. But that’s not all.

We need to get ready for the end time. Brace for the impact of the rough days that are ahead. Brace for impact because there is a resurrection coming. There is a life after death and there is an eternal destination. Each of us must prepare for death and resurrection and that final destination.

The third thing we need to prepare for is the **Rapture**. Not only will there be a resurrection, there will be a rapture, a catching away of all those who have placed their faith in Christ and have walked with him in obedience and faith. Paul’s instruction in 1 Thessalonians 4 said, “then those who are alive and are still left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.”

I don’t know when, I don’t know how, but I know the Lord will return and there will

be a resurrection and a rapture. The apostle Paul wrote by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, **“Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable and we will be changed.”** 1 **Corinthians 15:51-52.** That’s all of us – all who have trusted in Christ and lived for him.

Imagine the impact of that glorious moment as a feeling of transformation strikes you like you’ve never experienced before. Deformities are gone, the blind are suddenly given sight, the elderly are made young, the crippled are made whole, mortality gives way to immortality as we rise into the air, uniting with loved ones who have gone before us as we meet the Lord together to be with him forever.

Brace for impact my friends. These days are coming. Rough days, days that will cause men’s heart to fear and to fail. Brace yourself. Get ready for rough days, but also get ready for resurrection and the rapture. There is only one way to brace yourself for the impact of the end times and that is to come to Christ in faith, to repent of your sins, to turn from your sinful ways and begin to walk in the new life of Christ.

Rough times, resurrection and rapture are just ahead. So what do we do? Three things as to how we live as we brace for the impact of the coming days.

**Live honestly.** The bible is a truthful and truth-filled book. It is realistic in every sense of the word. I appreciate its honesty, its truthfulness, the reality. There is a great example of this in the passage we read earlier from 1 Thessalonians 4. When Paul speaks of death, he doesn’t tell us to dry our eyes and never weep or cry because we’re Christians and we understand about heaven and eternity. Instead, he speaks with honesty. We sorrow, we grieve, we cry, but not as those who are without hope. Don’t let anyone tell you that because the bible says that death has been swallowed up in victory that a believer shouldn’t grieve or sorrow over the loss of a loved one. Be honest and live honestly. Jesus is coming!

The bible calls us to real life, honest life, experiencing life in Christ that makes all the difference. You can afford to live honestly. Be truthful with God and with yourself. Be truthful with yourself concerning these end time events. Are you really ready for the rough days ahead? Is your hope and faith in Christ and is your faith built upon a solid

foundation? Do you know the word of God well enough to see you through the evil days that are coming? Be honest with yourself.

Be honest. If you died today on your way home from church, would you go to heaven or to hell? You know the answer, or at least you can know the answer. Be honest. Look at your life and how you are living it. Are you fooling yourself? Fooling your spouse, your friends, your family, your parents? You can't fool God. The end is coming, Jesus will return, are you ready? The bible calls us to honest living in these last days.

**Live hopefully.** Paul said we sorrow but not as those who have no hope. We are to live our lives hopefully. We know what's ahead. That's why we may sorrow when we consider the brevity of life here and the short time we've had to spend with someone, but we live with a hope that makes the difference. We know that eternity is ahead and if we have placed our faith in Christ, then to be absent from this body is to be present with the Lord. We know that the resurrection awaits us. The rapture awaits us. Heaven awaits us. Eternal life awaits us. Home is ahead for us and that fills us with hope.

The bible declares, **“For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say ‘No’ to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope – the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ...” Titus 2:11-12.**

We live differently and hopefully because we are waiting for this blessed hope - the glorious appearing of the Lord. We know he is coming again. That's how we face the discouragements of life without giving up, that's how we handle the death of a loved one without giving into despair, because we are looking for the coming of the Lord, for his glorious appearing. We know something better is just up ahead and so we rejoice. We won't let our hearts be troubled or be afraid because we know the Lord has gone to prepare a place for us and he is coming again to take us to be with him. We live hopefully as we wait for his return.

**Live holy.** Finally, we live a holy life because we know all of this to be true. The bible says, speaking of the return of the Lord and his glorious appearing, **“Everyone**

**who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as He is pure.” 1 John 3:3.** We recognize the Lord is returning and he is coming for a holy people, for a bride that has made herself clean and pure in the Lord. He is coming for a holy church. Ephesians says Jesus is coming for the church he died to redeem, for the people for whom he sacrificed his life that we might be saved and he expects us to be a holy bride, “...**a radiant church without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.” Ephesians 5:27.**

Is that how we look? Is that how we live? Honest. Hopeful. Holy. This is how people who are watching for and expecting the coming of the Lord – this is how they are to live. This is how we brace for the impact of the end time. Are we ready? Are we those people? Are you living like you believe what the bible says?

The days will get more difficult. It won't get easier to serve God, but everyone who has the hope of Christ and his return burning in their heart will brace for impact. We will prepare our hearts, we will devote our hearts, our lives to Christ. We will live honest, hopeful and holy lives so when he comes for us, we will be ready. Ready for the rough days. Ready for the resurrection. Ready for the rapture. Braced for impact, living honestly, hopefully, holy.

Brace for impact. Get prepared. Jesus is coming. Are you ready?