# Thriving in the Midst of “Big Trouble” — A Strong Foundation

**Context for the sermon:**

Do you imagine Covid-19 to be a greater threat than the wrath of God?

Covid-19 deaths approached 3,000 per day at the peak of the pandemic in the United States. We completely rearranged our lives in response to the Covid-19 virus—churches, businesses, airlines, schools, government, sports, vacations, parties, plans, everything.

In stark contrast, for many years we have sacrificed our children at a greater rate than the toll of this virus.  On average, almost 3,000 children per day; seven days a week; year upon year; every 30 seconds, another life.

The battle raging in our nation is a spiritual battle. It’s an attempt to throw off the values and principles that have guided us from our founding until today. We have overcome global conflicts, internal stresses, and even immoral treatment of one another. Those victories were made possible because of the Biblical principles, which gave us a standard to strive for.

More than 70 million Americans voted in support of unlimited, federally-funded abortion.  60 million children have been lost. The primary defense, in recent years, has been “a woman’s right to choose.” Nothing we have been told is more sacred than the right to choose what you can do with your own body. Suddenly, our right to choose is not so sacred. Abortion clinics have remained open. Churches have been closed. We have tossed aside our children. We have ignored God’s directions regarding marriage. We refuse to be constrained by Biblical standards of sexuality. We are consumed with envy & greed. We discard the truth and revel in deception. What will the outcome be?  For America, it is unclear.

Many Christians are a bit rattled. After all, we prayed, some even repented, some went without food and called upon God. There has been disappointment and despair over choices.

Some say we need to move forward, to return to civility and cooperation. Our assignment is not to cooperate with ungodliness and immorality. Yes, we are called to show love to all people. We are not given the assignment of calling evil good, and good evil. Do not confuse the two responsibilities.

The Church—people from every nation, race, language, and tribe—do not have a geographical location. We are salt and light. Our effectiveness comes from being dispersed and distributed.  “No one lights a light and hides it under a basket . . .”  Our loyalty to the country where we live is important, but our ultimate allegiance is to our King. Let’s align our hearts towards the Lord with a never-before-demonstrated intention. Let’s pursue God with an abandon that exceeds our determination to avoid Covid-19. Let’s walk a path of faith we have never traveled before.

**Sermon Outline:**

# Tribulation means “Big Trouble.” Are we approaching the End of the Age?

## We are experiencing turmoil beyond what we have seen in our lifetimes.

## What we’re experiencing is not new—every generation experiences “Big Trouble.”

### Cite examples of from World War II

### Cite more recent examples in the Rwandan genocide, the civil wars in Sudan and Syria.

### The difference between “big trouble” and “really big trouble” is whether you’re the one involved with it, or not. Just like the difference between a “surgery” and a “major surgery” is if you’re the one who is having the operation.

### Whether we are approaching the End of the Age, or not, our assignment remains the same. We have a responsibility to be Jesus’ advocates on the earth, standing boldly for Him and His Truth.

## Deuteronomy 20:1–4 (NIV84®)

## 1 When you go to war against your enemies and see horses and chariots and an army greater than yours, do not be afraid of them, because the Lord your God, who brought you up out of Egypt, will be with you. 2 When you are about to go into battle, the priest shall come forward and address the army. 3 He shall say: “Hear, O Israel, today you are going into battle against your enemies. Do not be fainthearted or afraid; do not be terrified or give way to panic before them. 4 For the Lord your God is the one who goes with you to fight for you against your enemies to give you victory.”

### The victory doesn’t come from the army or strategies.

### God may give you an effective army or strategy, but the victory comes from the Lord.

### We need a different spiritual response, so we can have different outcomes in our physical world.

# What is Our Response?

## Hebrews 12:2–3 (NIV84®)

## 2 Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. 3 Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

### Jesus is the foundation of our faith, and the only one who can bring us stability.

### The degree to which we believe this, the more stable we will be.

### Jesus could not fulfill God’s purposes without overcoming something.

### Neither can you or I.

## Matthew 7:24–25 (NIV84®)

## 24 “Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. 25 The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock.

### Jesus gives us some instructions in this scripture.

### You must not only hear his words, but also put them into practice.

### You need both parts of the equation to be wise.

# Foundations are Essential

## Psalm 11:3 (NIV84®)

## When the foundations are being destroyed, what can the righteous do?”

### The structure above the foundation will never be better than the foundation itself.

### This is also true in our personal and spiritual lives.

### If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?

### Focus on Jesus as you build and secure your foundation.

# A Personal Foundation; A Revelation

## 1 Corinthians 3:10–11 (NIV84®)

## 10 By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should be careful how he builds. 11 For **no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ**.

### The foundation of your faith is a person: Jesus.

### He is the one who rescued us from darkness and gave us new life.

### You have no standing, apart from Christ.

### Our identity, first and foremost, must come from being a Christ-follower.

## Isaiah 28:16 (NIV84®)

## So this is what the Sovereign Lord says: “See, I lay a stone in Zion, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone for a sure foundation; the one who trusts will never be dismayed.

### Jesus is the stabilizing component in our lives.

### Nations change, empires come and go, but God doesn’t change.

### We have to be willing to defend Jesus and offer others this truth, wherever God leads us.

## Ephesians 2:19–21 (NIV84®)

## 19 Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God’s people and members of God’s household, 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, **with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone**. 21 In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord.

### It’s no longer about Jew or gentile, or slave or free, or male or female—all the things we’ve used to identify ourselves or separate ourselves.

### The chief cornerstone is nothing other than the person of Jesus of Nazareth.

### THAT’S OUR MESSAGE!

## 1 Peter 2:4 (NIV84®)

## As you come to him, **the living Stone**—rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him—

### Standing with Jesus will come with opposition.

### Not everyone will like what you have to say, nor support you.

### Are you willing to stand with Jesus, even if it leads to rejection?

### If not, why not?

# Conversion Must Reach Your Will

## Acts 5:1–11 (NIV84®)

## 1 Now a man named Ananias, together with his wife Sapphira, also sold a piece of property. 2 With his wife’s full knowledge he kept back part of the money for himself, but brought the rest and put it at the apostles’ feet. 3 Then Peter said, “Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land? 4 Didn’t it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn’t the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied to men but to God.” 5 When Ananias heard this, he fell down and died. And great fear seized all who heard what had happened. 6 Then the young men came forward, wrapped up his body, and carried him out and buried him. 7 About three hours later his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. 8 Peter asked her, “Tell me, is this the price you and Ananias got for the land?” “Yes,” she said, “that is the price.” 9 Peter said to her, “How could you agree to test the Spirit of the Lord? Look! The feet of the men who buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out also.” 10 At that moment she fell down at his feet and died. Then the young men came in and, finding her dead, carried her out and buried her beside her husband. 11 Great fear seized the whole church and all who heard about these events.

### Ananias and Sapphira misrepresented their gift to the Church.

### They want the affirmation that comes from making a sacrificial gift, but they misrepresent it.

### It gives me pause in how I describe what I give.

### We see God judge them.

### It should be a warning to us about being sloppy with our faith.

### Our intent, in everything we do, must come down to honoring the Lord.

## Matthew 13:18–23 (NIV84®)

## 18 “Listen then to what the parable of the sower means: 19 When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is the seed sown along the path. 20 The one who received the seed that fell on rocky places is the man who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. 21 But since he has no root, he lasts only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, he quickly falls away. 22 The one who received the seed that fell among the thorns is the man who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it, making it unfruitful. 23 But the one who received the seed that fell on good soil is the man who hears the word and understands it. He produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.”

### Highlight each group, and what happens to each.

### The old English word for “worry” is “choke.” A predator would worry at the neck of a sheep to choke the life out of it.

### Again, we see the good result comes to the man who hears the word AND puts it into practice.

### There’s a correlation between your anxiety, worry, and uncertainty, and where you’re placing your focus.

### Keep your focus and attention on the Lord and what He’s doing.

### How can I cooperate with Him more fully?

### How can I bring greater alignment with Him?

# Prayer:

## Let's give the Holy Spirit permission to give to each of us the individual understanding for what we need to become more stable in this season:

*Father, thank You for Your Word, and for its truth, authority, and power. I thank You that You love us. Lord, there truly is nothing new under the sun. The temptations we face and the challenges we see have faced your people for generation, upon generation, upon generation. Lord, we come tonight because we recognize that we're inadequate in ourselves. In our understanding, learning, and experience, we are not equipped for the opportunities and the challenges before us, but we believe You are. Holy Spirit, we ask for Your help. If there's any place within ourselves where we have tolerated, accepted, or overlooked something that has limited or hindered us, help us to see it. May a spirit of repentance come to us. Where we have been glib or disrespectful, may the fear of the Lord come to us. We want to cooperate with You. Give us understanding hearts, eyes to see, and ears to hear, that Your very best might come to our lives. In Jesus' name, Amen.*