

Watch Christ's Judgment

LHC: Message Twenty-Nine (980712PM)

Week 29: Watch Christ's Judgment

(Revelation 9)

As the end of days approaches, you can find hope as you watch the judgment of Jesus!

SUNDAY: Enduring Hope in Jesus

*"And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But **he who endures** to the end will be saved."*

—Matthew 10:22, emphasis added

When Jesus commissioned His disciples to go forth in their work for Him, in verse 22b above, He was basically telling them: "He who perseveres under stress and trials by abiding and remaining in Me will be saved." In the last days, Jesus says that this will characterize those who are really His children. Thus, no matter what happens before or during the Great Tribulation—His true children *will* endure.

Jesus also said that the generation who sees His plan unfold for the end of days will witness His Second Coming. How can we best get ready for that momentous event? We need to have *waiting hope* for Christ's return. We need to have *trusting hope* for whatever is to come in our future. We need to have *clinging hope* in Jesus as our all-wise guide for daily life, and avoid whatever grieves Him. And through *sheltering hope*, we must resist fear, for Christ is our safe and secure eternal refuge. In summary, what we need to believe today is what Jesus taught: this world is not our home.

Our real home is the one our master architect, Jesus, went to prepare for us (John 14:2–3), and He says that "moving day" is fast approaching. But until then, we can try to wondrously imagine our brand-new home—a mingling of the familiar and the unfamiliar, the earthly and the more-than-earthly. For heaven is a place, but not exactly like earthly places. It contains recognizable features, but the strangeness and transcendence keep alive our awareness that earthly images do not exist in the ordinary manner in heaven.

I love the way this author expresses his thoughts on heaven: "Oh, the wonders of our promised Haven, the glories of that eternal Home! But nothing will compare with the knowledge that Heaven is just the outflow of Him. In each aspect . . . concerning that heavenly City, we see a character trait of Him, our Savior. Let us seek Him, and in the words of the song-writer so true: 'Tis heaven below, my Redeemer to know, For He is so precious to me.'"

How exciting it is to contemplate these comforting elements of heaven as presented in this excerpt from the Carl F. H. Henry Commencement Address by Harold Lindsell: "The last thing will not be bombs, but blessings; not war, but peace; not

uncertainty, but confidence; not sickness, but health; not weakness, but strength; not longing, but satisfaction; not sorrow, but joy; not weariness, but vigor. There's a great time coming, so let us lift up our heads and our hearts, for the day of our redemption draweth nigh."

What should talk about heaven mean to us in the twenty-first century? Simply this: if the simultaneous increase in catastrophic storms, massive earthquakes, deadly pestilences, wars of terror, and looming threats from objects in outer space are indeed some of the "birth pangs" Christ spoke about, then meditating on heaven's glories can be very reassuring. Such thoughts in turn will promote waiting, trusting, clinging, sheltering hope—the hope that anchors—*enduring hope!*

My Prayer for You This Week: *I thank You, dear Father, that You are the God of hope. But I pray for those who do not understand what I am talking about because they have never responded to Your offer, "Come unto Me all You that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." That was a gracious offer with Your outstretched arms of salvation. I hope in You because I know You, because I know that I have responded to You and that You live within me. I belong to You, but if there are those who do not share that hope, may they flee to You, oh Christ. If they don't know how, may they simply say, "Jesus, I come to You." I pray that no one would hear of Your great salvation and refuse to come. As for we who know You, may You be working in us so that we wait in hope, that we trust in hope that You will see us through the even gloomier days ahead for this planet. May we hold forth the Word of God and shine as a light until the day of Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.*

MONDAY: Jesus and the Angels of Doom

*And I saw a star fallen from heaven to the earth. To him was given the key to the bottomless pit. And **he opened the bottomless pit**, and smoke arose out of the pit like the smoke of a great furnace. So the sun and the air were darkened because of the smoke of the pit.*

—Revelation 9:1–2, emphasis added

In chapter 9, the Apostle John introduces us to the dreadful realm of the fallen spirits and their abode: the abyss. At this point, the fifth angel sounds the fifth trumpet, which is a preview of hell—endless darkness. This bottomless pit is the holding tank of punishment for the fallen angels, demons, the beast, the false prophet, and Satan (Revelation 9:1–2, 11; 11:7; 20:1–3). These spirit-beings of the highest magnitude of evil are left over from Satan's rebellion.

Jude tells us that some of these evil spirit-beings tried to corrupt the human race so that the promised Seed of the woman, Jesus Christ, could never come. Others seem to be key leaders of Satan's forces, while still others have been so vile that they have been held back until Revelation 9. Like Satan, these demonic spirit-beings are filled with a hatred for God and mankind.

The success of Satan's mission "*to steal, and to kill, and to destroy*" is evident throughout the history of planet Earth. From the time Cain slew his brother, Abel (Genesis 4:8), strife and bloodshed among men has never ceased to exist. But not until

Assyria was there a society that conquered in a global way. After the Assyrian conquests, Babylonian, Persian, and Greek armies sowed blood, broken bodies, and death across the face of the earth. In cold, calculated, and cruel efficiency, the Romans then fought and won the world we know.

By the thirteenth century, inhabitants of Asia were mesmerized by the Khans, and the Mongol Empire was carved across the continents, leaving an estimated ten million dead in its path. Five hundred years later, Napoleon ravaged Europe for twenty years, resulting in a death toll of five million as his armies blindly followed him. The most vivid despot, however, is the strange little man who hypnotized some of the most sophisticated and civilized cultures on the planet into becoming barbaric butchers of humanity. Hitler caused upwards of fifty million deaths, six million of them being the gassed and murdered people of promise—the Jews.

Those are dark pages in history—and Satan and his forces have relished every single page so far. But far worse is yet to come. If Revelation 9:1–2 and 11, Revelation 11:7, and Revelation 20:1 and 3 are taken literally, then God has designed an impregnable fortress that holds the most fearsome creatures existing anywhere in the universe. This abyss, or bottomless pit, is only an intermediate step before the final abode of the prince of darkness and all his followers. In Revelation 20, the final place of terror is the lake of fire—the gehenna or hell Jesus spoke of so often in His warnings scattered throughout the Gospels. The fallen Lucifer, Satan himself, will be given permission to open the dungeon of demons and loose the legions of terrors. That is a dreadfully frightening prospect for the earth dwellers!

The apostle Peter warns us to keep alert: *But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away . . . ; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness? (2 Peter 3:10–11).*

The coming judgment should motivate you to conduct yourself in the light of eternity, and deploy yourself for God. In these end days, you have the greatest opportunity of all time! Before it is too late, talk to others about Christ and read the Scriptures to them. Be available for divine appointments to lead men, women, and children to the Lord. In other words, I exhort you to be a Christlike example who will draw others to Jesus!

Here are some practical choices you can make for how to live godly every day until the end. Note these five points in 2 Peter 3:10–18:

1. **Keep alert.** Staying alert should encourage you to live a godly life (vv. 10–11).
2. **Build a fireproof life.** Don't fear the day of God, but eagerly look forward to it. Forsake materialism and other worldly interests, and invest in that which lasts forever (vv. 12–13).
3. **Look up.** Live purely by expecting the Lord's return at any moment (v. 14).
4. **Study the Book.** God's Word will help you guard your heart and encourage mature living (v. 17).

5. **Obey Jesus.** If you love Him, you will obey Him. That is essential if you wish to grow spiritually (v. 18).

Suggestion: write the five points above in your Bible, and then refer back to them regularly until you habitually live by each of these truths. If you do, God will greatly bless you for it!

TUESDAY: A Preview of Hell — Relentless Terror

Then out of the smoke locusts came upon the earth. And to them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power.

—Revelation 9:3, emphasis added

As the shaft leading downward is unlocked, the infernal smoke of the pit will billow out of the darkness and unleash the pent-up fury of hell. When that pit is opened, locusts will emerge like the smoke of a furnace. With the most destructive imagery known to man, the Apostle John described the creatures as locusts.

Because locusts were such relentless destroyers, no plague was more fearsome in the ancient world. Truly, the day of the Lord, portrayed in this short prophetic oracle's revelation through God's Spirit, is a day that is to be heeded. God clearly demonstrates the need for repentance and the physical disaster that must follow moral disintegration.

As a vehicle of judgment, three times God uses locusts as a plague of horrific proportions:

1. Moses unleashed an eighth plague on Egypt—locusts that horribly devoured every green thing left after the hail (Exodus 10:4, 12–14, 19).
2. God sent a plague of locusts on Israel that horribly destroyed all that was green and thus caused economic devastation as well (Joel 1–2).
3. The fifth trumpet will sound the release from the abyss of horrible demonic hordes of locusts (Revelation 9:3, 7).

Today, few readers of the book of Joel are likely to experience a locust plague. With current eradication methods, a locust swarm in modern Israel is indeed a rare phenomenon. In ancient times, however, the land of Israel was frequently subject to invasions by the desert locust, *schistocerca gregaria*. Exodus 10:1–20 describes the locust as perhaps nature's most awesome example of the collective destructive power of a species. Adult locusts weigh a maximum of two grams, and yet their combined destructive force can leave thousands of people in famine for years. The locust plagues were very much feared in ancient Egypt. So much so that the peasants were in the habit of praying to the locust god, for Satan likes to keep superstitious peoples enslaved to his demonic horde's evil powers.

John J. Davis reports:

A swarm can contain over a billion creatures that, all together, can weigh more than three million pounds. One locust, with his colleagues, form gregarious marching bands up to ten miles wide and ten miles long. The marching bands move forward at a slow cadence, perhaps no more than 250 feet per hour, and may travel no farther than fifteen miles from their staging area. But within their

path the hoppers may consume virtually every tender blade of grass or legume. The extraordinary appearance of this marching band with its mass of tiny pullulating bodies can be unnerving, to say the least. In the words of Joel, ‘Before them earth trembles, Heaven shakes . . .’ (Joel 2:10). The marching bands are oblivious to obstacles: ‘They rush up the wall, they dash about in the city; They climb into the houses, They enter like thieves by way of the windows’ (Joel 2:9).¹

As we contemplate the horrors ahead, we need to make sure to build our lives upon the Rock, and not upon the sands of life that will sweep us away in the storms. We should live expectantly to hasten the coming of the Lord. How can we hasten the day of God? Jesus will return when the last person to become a part of His church is saved. In light of that, every time I kneel to pray with someone who wants to be born again, I expectantly think: *Maybe this is the last one whom God will save before Jesus calls His church home!*

Do you want to hasten heaven? Lead people to Christ! Build a fireproof life: don’t live for what is here on earth, because all this is going to pass away. That is how to best get ready for the end!

WEDNESDAY: The Fearsome Symbol of the Locust

*And they were not given authority to kill them [humans], but to torment them for five months. **Their torment was like the torment of a scorpion** when it strikes a man. In those days men will seek death and will not find it; they will desire to die, and death will flee from them.*

—Revelation 9:5–6, emphasis added

The time limit God gives these horrible creatures is the same as the normal life cycle of a physical locust. (It is interesting that this plague lasts the same duration as the flood waters of Genesis 8:1.) After five months, these creatures will be swept back, presumably to where they came from, and God will again close the pit.

Locust plagues were so dreaded in ancient times that even the Hebrew vocabulary used to describe locusts as fearsome. There are six different Hebrew words for locust, and each is sobering:

1. *Gazam*—**shearer**: This portrays the machine that makes a destructive path of sheared-off living plants left in the wake of these monsters.
2. *Arbel*—**swarmer**: This is a reference to the innumerable hordes that darken the sky as a black cloud.
3. *Hasil*—**finisher**: This refers to the devastating aftermath of all green plants finished off by the army that passes.
4. *Solam*—**annihilator**: This is another glimpse of how those who saw these hordes described their work.
5. *Hargol*—**galloper**: This notes the incredible speed with which they pour out unstoppable destruction across the face of the earth.
6. *Tzelatzel*—**creaker**: This reminds us that locusts are ominously heard creaking toward you long before they are seen.

The people who lived in the ancient world dreaded these locusts. They would thus declare that the shearing, swarming, finishing, annihilating, galloping, and creaking army was coming toward them! And that is what God sends in Revelation 9, but He does so by way of the demonic army.

In Revelation 9:7–10, the shape of these creatures is like horses prepared for battle. John was grasping for words to describe monsters that can fly like locusts, gallop around like horses, carry a venomous sting like scorpions, look somewhat human with hair, and bite with sharpness like a lion. These horrible and ghastly creatures will do great damage to humanity!

Revelation 9:11 tells us: *They had as king over them the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon, but in Greek he has the name Apollyon.* In Hebrew, *Abaddon* means “Destruction”; in Greek, *Apollyon* means “Destroyer.” Thus, leading the most horrible assault ever launched on mankind will be the Destroyer himself—the One who defected from the holy presence of God to decay into the murderous liar and hater of truth—the chief officer of Satan, or perhaps even the old Dragon himself. Most likely this is one of the arch-fallen angels. As Jesus has said, Satan wants to steal God’s blessings.

The absolute contrast between Jesus and the devil is seen in John 10:10: *“The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy.”* When Satan is allowed to do what he wants to do on this planet, he steals the joy of humanity: he destroys life as we know it, and he kills human beings. But Jesus said, *“I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.”*

Jesus says the contrast couldn’t be greater: Satan offers to steal everything you have that is worthwhile, destroy anything that is of value, and to kill you. He robs people of true joy and offers them only emptiness. He destroys their virtue and purity. If they follow that path long enough, it leads to death and eternal separation from God in hell. But Jesus said, “If you come to Me, I will give you an abundantly overflowing life that just won’t stop.” That is what Jesus offers.

Which offer sounds best to you? How foolish it is for anyone to purposefully make any other choice than to receive the eternal hope that is found in Jesus Christ alone. Are you ready to meet Him?

THURSDAY: How to Build a Fireproof Life

*But [those] who were not killed by these plagues, **did not repent of the works of their hands**, that they should not worship demons, and idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk. And they did not repent of their **murders** or their **sorceries** or their **sexual immorality** or their **thefts**.*

—Revelation 9:20–21, emphasis added

Armies that dwarf all that ever marched are poised, even now, awaiting a moment known only to God. As the sixth angel sounds, the ultimate weapon will be unleashed: angels of doom by the hundreds of millions. These cosmic warriors will be unstoppable and deadly! They will need no weapons, no food, no vehicles, and no rest; and in their wake will fall more than all wars have ever killed. Yet, horribly, the earth dwellers will

miss the message and change nothing. They will still turn their backs on God to worship themselves and the demons that have cruelly enslaved them in hatred and lust.

The two-thirds of humanity that Jesus mercifully spares will respond no better than those in hell who gnash their teeth—as Jesus said seven times when He described the horrible place the hard-hearted would go (Matthew 8:12; 13:42, 50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30; Luke 13:28). Their gnashing implies the hatred of an unrepentant heart poured out at God’s judgment. They would not bow their knee when they were alive and breathing; they will not bow their knee other than the forced bowing at the judgment seat; and they will not bow in hell—for even then there will still be gnashing of teeth against God.

What will control the culture at the end of days? Revelation 9:20–21 reveals five striking evils that will grip the souls of humanity in those dark days:

1. **Godlessness:** Mankind will still willfully push the Creator out of their minds. Instead, these terrified earth dwellers will worship demons and the works of their hands: idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood which can neither see, nor hear, nor walk. Wherever idols are worshiped, even in churches today, those are demons. Whenever an idol gives deliverance from whatever is prayed for, it is a demon providing that deliverance. God does not operate through idols. Whether it is Far East or American Indian idols, or idols of religious American churchgoers, those are demons that are being worshiped.
2. **Callousness:** Even when people are dying by the thousands and millions and hundreds of millions, people will still be murdering one another.
3. **Mindlessness:** The word “*sorceries*” in verse 21 is actually *pharmakeia*, which means “druggings, sorceries.” Drugs have always been around. There have always been those who have consistently relied on the effects of drugs on their minds. And in this horrible hour, with the message of God calling the world to repentance, people will still be mindlessly following their drug-induced stupors and sorceries.
4. **Licentiousness:** Sexual immorality will abound. During this time of judgment, without the preaching of God’s Word that produces righteous influences, evil perversions will run rampant throughout society.
5. **Lawlessness:** While everything is burning, and the demon creatures are killing people, the homes and businesses of those who are killed are looted. Theft abounds!

All the above evils are prompted by a lust for pleasure, a lust for power, a lust for possessions, and a lust to maintain personal pride at the expense of God and others.

If you want to build a fireproof life, humble yourself because “*God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble.*” Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. . . . Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up (James 4:6b-8a, 10).

FRIDAY: When Life Becomes Overwhelming

Through the LORD's mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness. "The LORD is my portion," says my soul, "Therefore I hope in Him!" The LORD is good to those who wait for Him, to the soul who seeks Him.

—Lamentations 3:22–25, emphasis added

The very anticipation of catastrophic world events on top of everyday personal trials can be so overwhelming that at times it may *feel* like life is just too painful to even go on. Have you ever felt that way? Jeremiah did. In the Old Testament, without all the benefits and blessings we have in this church age, he lived through a life in shambles, friends all dead, and the stench of destruction all around everything he held dear—yet he lived in hope. How can that be?

True children of God endure under affliction. The Greek word for endure, *hupomeno*, is a very interesting word. In fact, I want to give you the privilege of sharing in one of the most spectacular things that I like to do through the Bible: see the *analogia scriptura*—the analogy of the Scripture as one Scripture explains another Scripture, and it all fits together like a beautiful woven tapestry.

Consider this association: The word *meno*, which is used all through John 15, means “to abide.” In the Greek language, putting a preposition that amplifies, like *hupo*, in front of a verb like *meno*, gives this meaning: “to abide under something.” It means “to abide when you’re being squashed, when you’re being pressed, to super-abide when things are not the way that you wanted them, or expected, or hoped them to be.”

Endure (*hupomeno*) is used only eighteen times in the New Testament, and it is used to describe a genuine believer’s response to dreadful and fearsome times, such as when the world is falling apart, as Matthew 24 describes. Some may wonder what “enduring under affliction” means. Let’s follow this beautifully illustrated trail through the New Testament to find out:

(Emphasis added to the following verses.)

Mark 13:13: “You will be hated by all for My name’s sake. But **he who endures to the end shall be saved.**” This verse is a parallel to Matthew 24: it is from the same sermon, the same context, and the same event when Jesus is speaking the Olivet Discourse. The thirteenth verse of both chapters is identical. The verse reflects the response of a true believer, one who endures or abides in Christ under trials.

Romans 12:12: [Be] *rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer.* The bold portion is *hupomeno*, which means “abiding under difficulty.” The evidence of a true believer is that he or she patiently and superbly abides in Christ when going through tribulation.

I am often asked: Are Christians going to go through the Great Tribulation? We will not be attacked and stung by all the horrific demon hoards from the pit that opens in Revelation 9. However, we will all experience *thlipsis*, which is the word for tribulation that pictures something being squashed. If you’ve ever gotten your hand painfully shut in a door, you could say that it was *thlipsised*, or squashed by incredible pressure. That is what tribulation is, and when we are undergoing incredible pressures

we are to rejoice in hope, and abide faithfully (*hupomeno*), regardless of the situation (Romans 12:12).

Our American mentality thinks that because we are going to be in the Rapture, we're going to miss all suffering. We will miss the Great Tribulation, but we are not going to miss the tribulation shaping up in our world that is hostile to the gospel. The Muslim faith is committed to opposing everything we believe, and Satan is seeking to erase us from this planet. So we all need to *hupomeno*—to abide faithfully in difficulties with enduring hope as we continue steadfastly in prayer.

First Corinthians 13:7: [Love] *bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.* This is about the love that Christ implants in our hearts at salvation. When we have Christ and His love shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Spirit, we will bear all things, believe all things, and have enduring hope in all things

Second Timothy 2:10, 12: *Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. . . . If we endure, we shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us.* This is saying: "I will endure or abide faithfully in whatever I am called to go through. I will faithfully hope and trust in the Lord." Christians who are characterized by perseverance will also reign with Christ.

Hebrews 12:2–3, 6–7: [Be] *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. For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. . . . "For whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives." If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten?* This passage is a beautiful picture of Christ's ministry for us. He remained super-faithful under all He was going through, and endured the pain and shame of the cross to the end.

To prevent becoming weary and discouraged in our own trials, we need to consider all that Jesus went through for us. He was both 100 percent God and 100 percent human. In His humanity, God's grace was sufficient for Him, just as it is for us. One of the things we must endure is God's chastening of sin in our lives, which is an evidence of salvation. God hates sin, so He says: "I will punish it. I will not allow you to continue in unrepentant sin. If you endure the chastening by abiding in Me until I've finished what I want to accomplish in you, that is a sign you're My child." If you don't endure God's correction, are never chastened, and habitually choose to run toward sin rather than flee from it, that is a sign you may not belong to Christ.

James 1:12: *Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.* James, the brother of Jesus, was the pastor of the first church at Jerusalem. He wrote to his people who were fresh out of Pentecost. If we are faithful under tribulation, under trials, under whatever we have to go through in life to please God, we will receive the crown of life.

So regardless of what you face this week, this month, or this year, grab hold of God's overflowing hope. Let Him weave your weaknesses, like fragile fibers, in with the

countless strands of His promises in the Scriptures to stretch and twist you into waiting hope. And then, when troubles increase, let Him bring you a fresh portion of His hope and goodness as you wait, and enduringly find hope in Christ!

SATURDAY: The Hope That Anchors

*And we know that **all things work together for good** to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.*

—Romans 8:28, emphasis added

Do we really believe this assurance? In our testimonies and prayers, and even in some of the songs we sing, we seem to enjoy talking about our little troubles and difficulties, multiplying and magnifying them. This almost sounds like we're *spiritual* hypochondriacs. At such times, perhaps we have simply lost sight of the waiting, trusting, clinging, and sheltering hope that is ours in Christ—the hope that endures and anchors our souls during trials.

In the seventeenth century, a model example of one who possessed the enduring hope that anchors is seen in the life of Martin Rinkart—a pastor at Eilenberg, Saxony, during the Thirty Years' War (1618–1648). Because Eilenberg was a walled city, it became a severely overcrowded refuge for political and military fugitives. As a result, the entire city suffered from famine and disease. In 1637, a great pestilence swept through the area that resulted in the death of around eight thousand persons, including Rinkart's wife. At that time he was forty-one, widowed, and the only minister left in Eilenberg because the others had either died or fled. Rinkart alone conducted the burial services for 4,480 people, sometimes as many as forty or fifty a day!

From that horror came one of the great hymns we possess as Christ's church:

Now Thank We All Our God

*Now thank we all our God With hearts and hands and voices,
Who wondrous things hath done, In whom His world rejoices;
Who, from our mothers' arms, Hath blessed us on our way
With countless gifts of love, And still is ours today.*

*O may this bounteous God Through all our life be near us,
With ever joyful hearts And blessed peace to cheer us;
And keep us in His grace And guide us when perplexed,
And free us from all ills In this world and the next.*

*All praise and thanks to God The Father now be given,
The Son, and Him who reigns With them in highest heaven,
The one eternal God, Whom earth and heaven adore;
For thus it was, is now, And shall be ever more. Amen.*

—Martin Rinkart (1586–1649)

We may well ask why all his dramatic experience and difficulty is not reflected in Rinkart's hymn. Had the good pastor seen so much stark tragedy that he had become insensitive to human needs and problems? Of course not. He simply had come to believe that God's providence is always good, no matter how much we are tempted to doubt it.

Make a choice to live in hope: As a Christian, a favorite and often-quoted Bible verse is Romans 8:28. At the beginning of today’s devotional, that reference appears in the New King James Version.

In the unclear world of tomorrow, it is entirely possible that “fitting into His plan” means that we as Christians may experience great difficulty, persecution, and even war and death. We should therefore prepare ourselves and our families for this possibility, so that if such trials come, we might face them with the hope that anchors—in spiritual victory that gives testimony, like Pastor Rinkart’s, that ours is a faith that works.

Rinkart’s experience and his hymn wonderfully confirm these words of the apostle Paul: *“What can separate us from the love of Christ? Can affliction or hardship, Can persecution, hunger, nakedness, peril, or the sword? . . . I am convinced that there is nothing in death or life, in the realm of spirits or superhuman powers, in the world as it is or the world as it shall be, in the forces of the universe, in heights or depths—nothing in all creation that can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord”* (Romans 8:35–39, New English Bible).

If you will memorize and meditate upon that passage, God will ground you in this, His living hope that anchors: nothing can separate us from the love of Christ!

¹ John J. Davis, *Moses and the Gods of Egypt: Studies in Exodus* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1986), pp. 128–30.