**Times That Try Men's Souls**

by Tom Roberts

Someone said, "These are the times that try men's souls." Naturally, we are inclined to think that our times are worse than any others that have ever been and while such isn't so, **these** times are **our** times so we are the ones who are being tried today.

Without a doubt, souls are being tried and tested.

**Moral Trials**

Young people are experiencing tremendous temptations on every hand. Sex is pictured as being the most desired part of life and few are remaining virtuous. There is a constant stream of influence through TV shows that portray boys and girls, men and women living together, in bed together, having babies without wedlock, dancing, scantily dressed, and with few morals. The norm in our day is to view sex without the sanctity of marriage as acceptable. Movies also are an influence toward evil as every conceivable moral code is violated. Some movies have been advertised that portray incest, child abuse, sadism, homosexuality, adultery and every form of illicit sex.

With this deluge of propaganda flooding the nation, it is of little wonder that many young people are led to believe that any standard of morality and virtue is out of date and no longer any good. But "God is not mocked" (Galatians 6:7) and we should not be deceived by appearances. **The decline of our nation can be directly attributed to such evil influences.** Without morals, man is capable of any vice. Therefore, any immoral influence (such as these named) is a cancer that eats away at the moral fiber of a nation.

**The Family**

Our families are also being tested. Pressures are being put upon the family unit that are literally breaking it apart. Pressures from the market place (how much money can we make?), our busy schedules (with no time at home), the drive for recreation (even if it kills us!), and the generation gap (another phrase for selfishness), all attempt to destroy our homes. There is no more basic building block of civilization than the home. Destroy that and we have only the Lord and His church as the refuge of the soul. But watch it: when the home is weak, involvement in the Lord's church also suffers. When families get in trouble, they will stop attending services, forsake God and fall completely into the world. One of the danger signals which should alert elders to problems facing the church is the danger signals coming from families. We need to redouble our efforts to strengthen homes. **The decline of our nation can be directly attributed to the decline of our homes.** Women's lib and the associated evils have shaken our values for men and women, parents and children. Unless and until we return to the basic Bible teaching regarding God's will for happy families, we will have no peace.

**The Church**

The church is also being tried in our generation. No doubt, every generation has had its own testing, but this in no way alleviates our own problems. We have seen, in one short generation, a major division within the church with multitudes of minor splinters within these divisions. In a second generation, it now seems clear that the leaven of error, broadened fellowship, lack of focus on Scripture and social gospel principles are at work again. Liberalism has so devastated the Lord's people until it is difficult to tell some churches from a country club. The work of the church has been lost in a maze of social reforms. The worship of the church has been turned into play acting with children's churches, puppet shows, theater groups and after/before dinner speakers. Some of these same innovations have begun to arise in some non-institutional churches. Spirituality is no longer a sufficient reason to serve God; we must also be entertained. Lost somewhere in this maze are the few who seek to worship God in spirit and truth. And these few are ridiculed as "anti" and worse. So few have the strength to stand the test.

**The Answer to Our Trials**

What is the answer to the trying of our souls? Brethren, is it any different than it has ever been? From the time of the prophets until now, the answer has always been, "The just shall live by faith" (Hebrews 10:38).

There is no short-cut and no other solution. God has said, "But my righteous one shall live by faith: and if he shrink back, my soul hath no pleasure in him. But we are not of them that shrink back into perdition; but of them that have faith unto the saving of the soul." My faith rests upon what God has said (Romans 10:17) and I must face temptation (the trying of my soul) by obedience to and trust in God. When young people are tested by the lure of the world, their answer must be to live in a manner that pleases God. When families are put under pressure by an ungodly environment, we must retreat into positions of strength as outlined by God: family love, concern, fidelity, worship and mutual trust. When churches are faced with forces of liberalism and other "isms" they must return to a "thus said the Lord" for all that they do and believe. There are solutions to our problems, but we must trust God for them...there are no others.

Abraham had his own "time that tried his soul." So did Isaac, Jacob and all the patriarchs. So did Moses and Esther and all those characters revealed to us in the Scriptures. In fact the Scriptures reveal these stories for the very purpose that we might find the answers and find the strength to face our own "times of testing." "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that through patience and through the comfort of the scriptures we might have hope" (Romans 15:4).

My brother, my sister, do you have hope for the future? If not, you need to read your Bibles. God put these stories in the Bible so that a "cloud of witnesses" (Hebrews 12:1) will impart hope to us. They had their own time that tried their souls but they overcame by faith in God. Let us take cheer that we may also be able to overcome and join that elect band. The stakes are high but the reward is great. These are the "times that try men's souls" but we are equal to the task through Jesus Christ our Lord.