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Presentation Transcript

Let's Roll

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Bill here for LifeResource Ministries.

Today's title is *Let's Roll*.

I came back from my annual backpacking trip last week on Monday. The first day in the office was the 11th – September 11th – 9/11. And this year, it's eleven years ago. When that day comes to mind, I always think of Flight 93. It took off from Newark, New Jersey, headed west. All of a sudden the plane did a 180 and headed back to the east. We know now the hijackers intended to crash the plane into the White House. People on board, once they knew they'd been hijacked, began calling family on their cell phones, in the aftermath, providing us a sketchy picture of what happened. The hijackers had taken over the pilots' cabin. Some of the passengers huddled in the aft, trying to decide what to do. They understood that the hijackers were willing to give up their lives to kill Americans. They knew that, if they did nothing, they would die and so would many people on the ground, so they came to a decision. Since it was more than likely that they would all die, they would try to save Americans on the ground. They devised a plan to rush the cabin, using a food cart as a shield. Only one person at a time could fit in the aisle, so they had to line up single file for the assault. They had a man who was an experienced pilot of smaller craft. He possibly could have landed the plane had they been able to breach to cockpit and overcome the hijackers. It was an attempt, but the fact that they were calling loved ones to say goodbye tells us they knew that, if they rushed the cabin, they believed their chances were slim. The last cell transmission from any of them was from a man named Brent Beemer. He was talking to his wife. She heard him say to one of the other passengers, "Are you ready then? Let's roll." We all know what happened. They were victorious in that they disrupted the hijackers plans and forced them to auger into a farmer's field in rural Pennsylvania. And they all died, but many others were saved.

Who were these people? Well, they were people with plans, families, cares of life, work to do – people like you and me. They were not looking for trouble. They were just minding their own business. They just wanted to live their lives, just as we all do. But when trouble came, they responded. They've been called heroes. And, indeed, they were.

Well, that's a terrible episode that's passed. Today we're gathered together on a joyful occasion – the biblical Feast of Trumpets – a festival to celebrate the return of *our* hero, Jesus Christ. He's a hero because He sacrificed *His* life to save all the world. On this symbolic day, He will return to claim that which He saved – both the church and the entire world. It's by His courageous sacrifice that we can know about this day and prepare for His return and inclusion in His plan.

There are many aspects to this Festival of Trumpets that we could discuss. We could talk about the symbolism of the trumpet and the Old Testament observance. We could talk about prophecies and events leading up to Christ's return. We could talk about the events that take place *when* He returns. We could talk about the nature of the government that He's going to establish. Or we could talk about our role once He returns. All of these would be worthy topics for today, of course, but, instead of these topics, I would like to focus your mind with mine today on what it takes to be a saint.

Before we can be part of all the things that He promises, we have to do *our* part, don't we? How does Flight 93 fit into that theme? Well, we'll learn more about that as we go. I'm going to tie it in for you. But let's ask this question: What is a saint?

Let's turn to Revelation 11:15. Let's enter the flow of end-time events with the sounding of the seventh trumpet, which signals Christ's return. Let's look at Revelation 11:15.

Revelation 11:15 – *Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever." And the twenty-four elders, who sat on the thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshipped God, saying, "We give thanks to You, Lord God Almighty, who is, and who was, for You have taken Your great power and have begun to reign. The nations raged, but Your wrath came, and the time for the dead to be judged, and the time for the rewarding of Your servants, the prophets and saints and those who fear Your name, both small and great, and for destroying the destroyers of the earth."*

The New Testament tells us, that when Christ returns, the saints – that is, the church – will be with Him, in resurrected form, to receive the reward of eternal life and participation of Christ's work on the earth with Him.

But let's jump back in time now and see what the saints – the church – has seen and endured prior to Christ's return. Let's look in Revelation 13, beginning in verse 1.

Revelation 13:1 – *And I saw a beast rising up out of the sea with ten horns and seven heads, with ten diadems on his horns, and blasphemous names on its heads. And the beast that I saw was like a leopard. Its feet were like that of a bear's, and its mouth was like a lion's mouth, and to it, the dragon gave his power and his throne and great authority. One of the heads seemed to have a mortal wound, but its mortal wound was healed, and the whole earth marveled as they followed the beast. And they worshipped the dragon, for he had given his authority to the beast, and they worshipped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?" And the beast was given a mouth, uttering haughty and blasphemous words, and it was allowed to exercise authority for forty-two months. And it opened its mouth to utter blasphemies against God, blaspheming His name and His dwelling – that is, those who dwell in heaven. Also, it was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them. And authority was given it over every tribe and people and language and nation. And all who dwelt on the earth worshipped it – everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain. If anyone has an ear, let him hear.*

So this beast – that's all a metaphor for a governmental power – this beastly governmental power – is able to make war against the church prior to Christ's return – probably a one-sided deal. For Christians, it will be no cake walk like we live now – no freedom to express and practice our beliefs. Not only will the freedom of the church be restricted, but church people will be killed because of their beliefs. God's people will be killed in God's name, according to Bible prophecy.

When I first became a member of the church at eighteen years of age, I could read these words, but I couldn't conceive of this ever happening – not in the USA where I lived. Well, things have changed, haven't they? We can very easily see how it might happen now – just a few steps away from it.

Moving on. Are you aware that, at the end time, there are some Christians who won't have to go through the trial that we just read about? Let's read about that in Revelation 3, beginning verse 8.

Revelation 3:8 – *I know your works. Behold, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut. I know that you have but little power, yet you have kept My word and have not denied My name. Behold, I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie, behold, I will make them to come and bow down before your feet and they will learn that I have loved you. Because you have kept My word with patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world to try those who dwell on the earth.*

No matter what kind of difficulties these people faced, this group remains in the game – zealous for good works. They're not discouraged by world events or personal problems,

because their hope does not lie in political solutions or in personal power. Their trust is in God. And they carry on as best they can, no matter what, believing that God will do what He wants through them.

By contrast, there's another promise to another mentality among church people, as well. We can read about that in Revelation 3:14.

V-14 – *And to the angel of the church of Laodicea write: The words of the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of God's creation: I know your works, that you are neither hot nor cold. Would that you were either cold or hot. So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth. For you say, "I am rich. I have prospered. I need nothing." – not realizing that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked – I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, so that you may be rich, and white garments, so that you may clothe yourself, that the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see. Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline. So be zealous and repent.*

God tells us this group of church people think they have it made, but they're really blind to their own spiritual condition. They've not turned away from the truth, but they're not enthusiastic about it either. They think *knowing* the truth is sufficient, having no spiritual energy to be fired up about it, however. They don't have the "Let's roll!" attitude.

You might say, "That's not fair." It's much easier for some to be fired up, and others, just because of their temperament.... Well, that's true. What's the solution? Well, stop whining and go buy gold tried in the fire. It's not supposed to be easy. Both the Laodicean and the Philadelphian conditions are summarized in Revelation 16:15.

Revelation 16:15 – *Behold, I come as a thief. And blessed is the one who stays awake, keeping his garments on, that he may not go about naked and be seen exposed.*

Knowing the truth is not enough. Being a part of the church is not enough. Being a Christian is not enough. We must also be zealous for good works. We must seize the initiative, rather than sitting back, waiting for someone else to do something – to be spoon-fed, to blame our minister for not feeding us, or our parents for not training us. All excuses are just traps. When you stand before the judgment seat of Christ, and He asks you, "Why weren't you ready?" and you tell Him it was because your minister wasn't a good speaker, how do you think that's going to fly? Or, if you tell Him, "My congregation wasn't friendly?" Or what if you say the Bible is too big a book to get excited about reading it, how do you think Christ is going to accept that?

Why is the one group of saints extricated from the terrible end-time trial, while the other is not? Well, we've already seen the answer to that. It's in verse 18.

V-18 – *I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, so that you may be rich, and white garments, so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see.*

The ones that have to go through this trial need to go through it to be perfected. They're not getting the picture. So God is going to cause them to get it. It's God's way of loving them into His Kingdom. They're just too apathetic and too lethargic – not God-like enough. They're not growing, not changing, but stuck at a low level of spirituality – the nominal Christian.

What does God tell us about that other group – the persevering group – the Philadelphians? Let's look in Revelation 3.

Revelation 3:10 – *Because you have kept My word about patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world to try those who dwell on the earth.*

What does that mean? Well, let's start with the rudimentary concept of Christianity. It's in Romans 6, verse 3.

Romans 6:3 – *Do you not know that all of us, who have been baptized into Christ Jesus, were baptized into His death? We were buried, therefore, with Him by baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we, too, might walk in newness of life.*

There's no way of being a saint without giving up your life. It's just about when it happens. That's what baptism means. It means going down in the water to die and then coming up resurrected a new person – God's servant, not one's own.

In my first pastorate, years ago, one of the members was a man in a wheelchair. He suffered from rheumatoid arthritis, but was still fairly active. I used to admire him because of the things he would do, even though he was restricted to a wheelchair. I recall that he had a small party barge on a lake. He would wheel himself around the deck of the barge. And it worked well for him, except that it was hard for him to get there and get on the boat. He needed help. So, from time to time, he would invite me to go fishing with him. On one of our trips, I began asking him about his past. I learned that he was a soldier in World War II. Not only that, but he was in one of the first assault waves to hit the beach at Iwo Jima. He said it was inch by inch up the beach. The Japanese were raking the beach with machine gun and mortar fire. If you were lucky, you could find a log to hide behind or a depression to squeeze into. It was foot by foot through the jungle, as well, snipers were everywhere. People were dying all around. He said the worst fighting was in the mountains where the Japanese had built reinforced concrete bunkers and mounted heavy machine guns in them. The only way to disable them was to use flame throwers or hand grenades.

To attempt to use either one of those meant you would probably be shot or blown to pieces. I asked him what it was like to be in the landing craft headed for the beach with bullets whizzing all around. He said something I never forgot. “The only way you could do it was to accept the fact that you were going out to meet your death.”

From time to time, I’ve thought about that statement. I’ve contemplated what it would mean to be *willing* to go out and meet your death. In this scripture, Paul is talking about that kind of death. He died for Christ *literally*. But [there’s] more. Coming up out of the waters of baptism means living a life like *God* wants you to live, rather than your own – dying to sin.

Let’s look in Colossians 3:1.

Colossians 3:1 – *If then, you have been raised with Christ – Paul’s reference to baptism – seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God. Set your minds on the things that are above, not on the things that are on earth, for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ and God. When Christ, who is your life appears, then you, also, will appear with Him in glory. Put to death, therefore, what is earthly, and your sexual immorality, impurity, passions, evil desires and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these things, the wrath of God is coming.*

So what can we learn from scriptures about the fate of the Philadelphian attitude? Well, those who are saved from the hour of temptation do not have to be martyred, because they already died while they were alive. Paul talked about the suffering of the afflictions of Christ. They set aside their own things to be zealous for God, and to be zealous for God’s good works, and to do the work of God.

Philippians 3:7 – *But whatever I gained – Paul said – I count it as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss, because of the surpassing worth of knowing Jesus Christ, my Lord. For His sake, I’ve suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish in order that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith.*

Paul lost everything in his former life. In the modern world, we associate loss with depression and anger. But, instead of that, we find something else in Paul. Listen to the language: “. . .that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith.” He gave up everything. It was his choice. He was looking for something better than he could find in this life. And he committed himself to it.

Look in verse 10 of Philippians 3.

V-10 – *That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and may share His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death, that by any means I may attain the resurrection from the dead – not that I have already attained this, or I am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Jesus Christ has made me His own.*

Paul’s telling us, “I’ve lost everything. I’ve lost respect as part of the Jewish hierarchy, I’ve lost my church which is disintegrating before my eyes, I’ve lost my freedom, and I’m about to lose my life. Let’s roll.” He was zealous for good works.

Jesus told the Laodiceans to repent and be zealous. What does that mean? Well, let’s look in Titus 2, verse 11:

Titus 2:11 – *For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passion and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope – the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession who are zealous for good works. Declare these things. Exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you.*

In thinking about today, people tell me they’re too busy to keep the whole Feast. They have to work or go to school. They can’t afford the time. It’s too much. It’s too far from church to attend. You know, with as many independent churches of God around, how could that possibly be true? The problem is *not* that we’re too busy or that it’s too hard. It’s that we’re too busy doing our own stuff instead of God’s. Whatever it is that we’re too busy doing, that is what we’re zealous for. The Laodiceans are not zealous for God. I could tick off a long list of indicators. Indicators are only external behaviors, however. It would be much better if we could all just do a self-exam, repent and be zealous. You can’t afford to buy fuel to drive to church? Don’t beat yourself up over it. If you can’t, you can’t. If you’re older and sick, or you can’t see well, don’t feel guilty because you can’t do what you used to do. The real problem is not a problem of activity as much as it is a problem of the heart. You know, if you can’t go to church because you don’t have gas money, stay home and study your Bible. Or, if you can’t hear, you can still pray. When we see something beginning to fall by the way, we notice the behavior – the lack of interest in God’s things, the lack of attending church, the lack of involvement, the lack of tithing. Those are exterior things. By the time we see those things, the real underlying problem has advanced way too far. Other cares or interests have eclipsed our commitment to God.

Where are you in all this? It’s very hard for others to determine, so it’s for each of us.

What does a zealous attitude look like when there’s no plane to crash, no martyrdom to endure? What does it look like in everyday life for us? Well, when we get up in the morning, we think, “I have to go grocery shopping,” or “I have to go to work,” or “I have

to get the kids off to school.” And then we think, “Well, what does God want me to do today?” Well, He wants me to do all those things, but what else? “Will I give up something of God to do what I want or will I do what God wants first? Will it be to speak out boldly before people who don’t like God, or will it be to encourage someone who is ill, or will it be to set an example for my family, or will it be to continue that Bible study project that I’ve been procrastinating? Will it be to pray about our aunt who is sick?” And then we roll out of bed, we put our feet on the floor, and we say, “Okay, let’s roll.”

When the seventh trumpet sounds, there is going to be nothing passive or apathetic about Jesus Christ. In fact, once having received word from the Father, He may well turn to the heavenly host – the great assembled army of angels – and say, “Let’s roll.” If we care enough to emulate Him, we can take on more of that attitude while there is time. This is one situation where it’s much better to learn by exhortation than by experience. Our time to roll is now.