



## *Rapture Requirements*

*By: O. Eugene Valle*

In spite of recent errors attempting to set the date of the Lord's return, He is coming.

A failed prediction can cause saints to slip into apathy and carelessness. Some may say, "My Lord delays His coming." But Jesus is coming, and I believe He is coming soon. Our readiness for His coming requires that these abide: "faith, hope, charity [love]" (1 Corinthians 13:13).

Life is a journey. Heaven is our port of destination. Faith is the ship we sail on.

To arrive upon those distant shores we must continue in faith. Faith must abide — survive. "For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end" (Hebrews 3:14).

Without faith we have no Savior. Only those who place their trust in Jesus Christ shall be saved. Without faith we have no righteousness. Faith transfers His to us. Faith is a cargo ship. The problem is faith has no discriminatory ability. It takes on excess baggage. Some have taken their ship of faith treasure hunting and have strayed off course. They "ask amiss, that [they] may consume it upon [their] lusts" (James 4:3).

What a tragedy! They have shipwrecked their faith on the shoals of selfishness. Because of the love of money, they encountered tempestuous temptation and drowned in the murky sea of perdition. Jesus warned, "Beware of covetousness" (Luke 12:15).

He also asked this poignant question: "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8). Christians in this materialistic society would do well to draw strength from Christ's prayer for Peter: "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not" (Luke 22:32).

Hope is the telescope. It focuses on the heavenly prize, blocking out all that lies between. Only one eye is used to peer through the telescope. The other eye must be kept closed. So the Christian must bring every thought into captivity to this one objective — eternal life.

Hope too must abide. "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:13).

Girding the loins of one's mind has similar connotations to looking through a telescope. In Bible times men wore robes. For comfort they wore them loose. For running, working, or fighting, they belted down the loose ends. The message is temperance, bringing all desires under control and belting them down with the will of God. Girding the loins spiritually is a vital part of being ready for the Rapture. (See Luke 12:32–40.)

Time is short. There's a race to run, a battle to be won, work to be done. They that buy must be as though they possessed not. They that use this world must not abuse it. Rather, belt down every desire to live in luxury and leisure.

At a young age I learned the value of a narrow focus. My father raised sweet corn for the cannery in Lake Mills, Iowa.

He kept blinds on the horses' bridles to keep their focus forward. Otherwise they were always reaching to the row beside them for the luscious ears, taking the wagon off course. People are like that.

Jesus incorporated the telescope in the prayer He taught: "Our Father which art in heaven." Keeping heaven in mind when you pray keeps your ship of faith on course.

Hope purifies. It is also a happy hope (Hebrews 3:6) and a blessed hope (Titus 2:13). The thought of Christ's return will not terrorize those who are ready.

Love is the helm. It steers our ship of faith. Faith doesn't discern the difference between selfish desires and our neighbor's best interest. Love does.

Love is directional. If one loves money, he will pursue it. If one loves worldly pleasure, he will indulge in it. If one loves God, he will keep His commandments. If one loves heaven, he will forego all else for it.

Because of the directional aspects of love, Paul advised, "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth" (Colossians 3:2). To do this requires mortifying self, he explained.

Jesus knew our ship of faith needed love to steer it. He said, "Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven ... for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matthew 6:20,21).

The last lap of the journey is especially perilous. "Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold" (Matthew 24:12). "Men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous," and "lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God" (2 Timothy 3:2,4).

The early church Ephesus was indicted because the members "left" their first love. Laodiceans were reprimanded for materialism and lukewarmness. Unless they repent, they shall be spewed out of His mouth. Christ will not have a halfhearted, fickle, two-timing bride.

Love must abide in us when He comes. Virgins whose lamps have gone out are shut out. He is coming for those who love His appearing. Therefore guard love. If your rudder is broken, what hope have you?

Repent. Repair. Renew.

The Lord is coming soon. Be ready, "for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh" (Matthew 24:44).

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