

What Kind of Escapist Are You?

By Ginny Larsen

We are all escapists of some kind. We want to escape the cares of this world with its problems, sorrows, and suffering of any kind – unless you have something mentally wrong with you and enjoy pain! We are all motivated in every single thing we do by wanting to escape something. For example, we lose weight because we want to escape the judgment of others or the health risks that come with being overweight. We go to work because we want to escape poverty and suffering that goes with that. Many times, Christians who believe in the full redemption of Christ through His finished work, as consummated in the Rapture of the Church (catching up to be with Him forever, John 14:3, 1 Thess. 4:13-17, 1 Cor. 15:49-54), are said to just be “escapists” and somehow want to avoid the sufferings of Christ. I decided to do a word study on the word “escape” to clarify what the Bible says we should escape as Believers, what we will not escape, and who will escape what. I encourage you whenever you hear arguments of different belief systems or teachers to do that - study all that the Word has to say about it. In fact, in this day, when the meanings of words are being so skewed and changed, it is a good idea to look up word definitions and think critically of the many ways words are used. We are manipulated and persuaded by words so often. First of all, there are “straw-man” arguments that people set up to supposedly represent someone else’s position. They then tear down their own straw-man, and nobody catches on to what they are doing. Their argument makes sense to those who hear, so they don’t check it out any further—after all, they used Scripture. Well, so does the devil! I’ve learned, after listening to many of those type of arguments, to go to the Word to research it myself to see if these things be so, and ask myself what’s the real argument? What’s the real issue? Are they accurately portraying that? Or are they setting up a false premise? Many times the escapist argument is set up on a false premise. It is a straw-man argument.

Christians throughout history have not escaped suffering. The true Believer, though suffering is not what he wants, is willing to endure suffering for the Savior he loves and counts it a privilege to be considered “worthy to suffer for His name.” He is willing out of love and gratefulness to all that his Savior has done for him to suffer for Him, if need be, though he does not go looking for it. People who say Believers waiting for the Rapture are “escapists who just don’t want to suffer” have a false premise and misrepresent those who believe they will escape the Tribulation period – the 7 years of God’s wrath on this earth. In fact, I used to say that myself, because I didn’t have an understanding of what the Tribulation is and what the sufferings of Christ are. The Bible tells us that all who live godly lives in Christ Jesus will suffer. It is true that there are Christians who think God should only bless them in this world, and they look for an escape to any suffering or trial, because they see God as some sort of good luck charm rather than having a true understanding of Who He is and what He calls us to. While living in a fallen world, we suffer many things, just as the world does. Just being a Christian in an ungodly world will cause you to suffer, because the world hates Him and so hates those who truly believe in, trust, and follow Him and His true teachings. As the world grows more and more ungodly and takes on more of the nature of the flesh and the devil, they will all the more persecute Christians. Does the Bible say we will escape that? No. In fact, in many places, the Lord warns and assures us that if the world hated Him, it will hate us, and that we will be persecuted. Paul tells us, *“For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in Him but also suffer for His sake”* (Philippians 1:29 ESV).

As Christians, then, we can expect the tribulation **in this world that Christ suffered**. This

life as Believers is our time of tribulation, since Christ was crucified. If we are living truly for Christ, we won't escape that unless we hide ourselves away somewhere alone and never interact with the lost world. This world is the Christian's time of tribulation. This "tribulation" is not God's judgment – it is judgment from the world. It is also not a "finishing of our salvation" to make us "without spot or wrinkle" as though we had to go through an earthly purgatory to be ready for the Lord's coming. This negates the finished work of Christ and adds to His redemption. If you are trusting in anything other than that work alone, you will find it comes up short when you stand before a holy God. Non-believers should expect to suffer for their sin and be judged for it ultimately. This **they** will not escape. The only escape from this judgment of His wrath against sin is beforehand, when His grace and mercy is held out to them, drawing them to His free salvation, calling them to become one of His own dear children, simply by faith in His precious blood that was shed for them. If they refuse this, there is no more escape for them when the time of judgment comes.

*"For when **they** shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon **them**, as travail upon a woman with child; and **they** shall not escape"* (1 Thessalonians 5:3), *"and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will"* (2 Timothy 2:26). *"How shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard"* (Hebrews 2:3). *"See that you do not refuse Him who is speaking. For if they did not escape when they refused Him who warned them on earth, much less will we escape if we reject Him who warns from heaven"* (Hebrews 12:25).

Is the Christian to endure a time that the Lord calls "the day of the Lord" - which is a time of wrath prepared especially for this unbelieving world? Do we need some extra "purifying" that Christians throughout history have not had by going through the time of tribulation *"that is to come upon the whole world, to try those who dwell on the earth"* (Revelation 3:10b)? This time has been called *"the time of Jacob's trouble"* (Jeremiah 30:7) or "the day of judgment." How did Christians somehow make it to heaven in the past without this extra "purgatory" to cleanse them? What does the Bible say about this time regarding Christians? I believe it clearly says we will be delivered from that hour of trial and tribulation that is to come on this world. Jesus will deliver us by the Rapture of the Church before His wrath is poured out. Paul tells us we are *"to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, Jesus who **delivers us from the wrath to come**"* (1 Thessalonians 1:10), *"for God **has not destined us for wrath**, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ"* (1 Thessalonians 5:9). *"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"* (Revelation 3:10).

Yes, Christians are "escapists" if they believe in the power of the redemption of Jesus Christ, for He has promised that we who have "died with Him" will also be "raised with Him" and will escape His wrath. Ultimately, we will escape this body of death and be finally redeemed just as He promised. We will escape finally our sorrow in this world and enter into His joy, as He said we would. It is the blessed hope of the Believer! We will finally be with our Lord and Savior forever! Those who love Him look for His coming and long for Him. In fact, a crown is awaiting all that long for His coming as a bride longs for her groom. *"Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing"* (2 Timothy 4:8).

*"But watch yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly like a trap. **For it will come upon all***

who dwell on the face of the whole earth. But stay awake at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are going to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man” (Luke 21:34-37). The way of escape is through faith in the only sacrifice for our sin that was able to pay the true price of our redemption. Christ alone, is counted worthy, and only as we by faith become one with Him in His death and resurrection, as we put our faith in Him to be our salvation, can we escape. No works or suffering of our own will cut it. It is as filthy rags in His sight. Now is the day of salvation! Will you escape the wrath to come? If you have been born of His Spirit through simple faith in His saving power, He has promised you will: *“Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life”* (John 5:24 KJV). Will you escape the sufferings of Christ in this world now by taking the side of the world, denying Him, and enjoying whatever your passions tell you that you have a right to? Will you identify with Christ or with the world in their teachings and philosophies? Or will you escape your sin and its consequences and have eternal life in Christ? I guess one way or another you are an escapist. It's just what you will escape and what you will gain that matters.

“By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward” (Hebrews 11:24-26). Jesus said, *“If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for My sake, the same shall save it. For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away?”* (Luke 9:23-25)