

Transcription details:

17-Dec-2014 | The Biblical Prophecy Program™
What Does the Pre-Wrath Rapture Position Teach? – Ep. 17

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It's time for the Biblical Prophesy program with your host, Alan Kurshner, of Eschatos Ministries.

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What does the pre-wrath position teach? Welcome to another episode of the Biblical Prophesy program. I know many of you are listening to this program through a computer, a laptop or a desktop or something, but there's other ways-- Actually, one major way you can listen to it other than the computer, and that is, if you have a smart phone, you can actually subscribe to this program. You can actually listen to the show as you're commuting to work, as you're maybe walking around the house doing some errands or or tasks around the house or something like that. So, you don't have to listen to this program on the computer. For example, on any smartphone, but let me maybe begin with the iPhones. If you own from what I've been informed the new iPhone 6, if you have the new iPhone 6, there is actually a podcast app hardwired into your desktop on your on your smartphone. It looks like again, this is for the iPhone 6 - there's a small little icon app and it's purple, has little microphone on there. If you click onto that and in the bottom you'll see search. You click on search, just type in the biblical prophecy program and you can just subscribe to this program, and every time a new program is posted out there, it will notify it on the app itself. And you can do this for the iPhone 5. The app is not hardwired, you are going to have to download the app from the Apple store so just go into your little app icon and search for the Biblical Prophecy Program.

If you own something other than an iPhone, I know Android or other ones, I know there is different podcast apps out there, so you may want to download one of those. There is always Stitcher, download the Stitcher app. So, there is different ways you can easily listen to this show. Again, for your convenience, instead of just sitting in front of a computer, you can listen to it as you are communing to work. And of course, you can always-- I know many of you of just go straight to the website itself and listen to it from the website or even iTunes on your computer - you can subscribe to iTunes as well. Again, there is a lot of people who listen to the show that actually don't visit the website, just listening to the audio program, but there is some valuable content I do blog. I don't really talk a whole lot about blogging on the show, but if you go to my website - alankurschner.com - you can see there's an RSS feed for the blog itself. You can subscribe to that so you can get updates on blog posts.

Well, I think its about time I devote an entire episode to a full-orbed explanation of the pre-wrath position. In episode two and actually episode one, I talked about the pre-wrath position, I explained it, and other episodes I've kind of talked about different aspects of pre-wrath eschatology. As I mentioned episode two, I gave four reasons why the biblical celestial disturbance event supports the pre-wrath rapture position, and you can find that at allankushner.com/2, that's number two. But today, I'm actually going to devote this entire show to the essential - that's the operative word there - the essential tenets of the pre-wrath position. What I mean by essential is that, these are the core minimum beliefs, tenets that you must hold to if you're going to consider yourself as a pre-wrather. In



other words, if you deny any of these definitional tenets that I'm going to give - it's 15 of them - you can't, in a meaningful sense of the term, you can't say that you are a firm pre-wrather eschatology. Because these are tenets-- again, they're definitional, which means the define the pre-wrath position.

A few years ago I thought really hard on this topic, I was asking myself, "What's the bare minimum, the fundamental beliefs to the pre-wrath position, or at least to-- if someone's going to affirm pre-rap, what do they have affirm?" And so I ended up writing an article outlining these tenants, again, 15 in total, and I'll give the link to the article in the show notes, at alankurshner.com /17. And I thought really hard on this, because I think it's important. There's some confusion out there on issues of what's the primary issue, a fundamental issue and secondary issues? Can I disagree on these other secondary issues and still be pre-wrath? So, that's what I'm going to talk about on today's program. I'm not just going to bulletpoint these 15, I'm going to actually elaborate on each one as well.

But first, let me preface this exposition of these tenets with two points. First, as I mentioned, these are 15 essential tenets that is that each one is necessary and collectively they are necessary, that one needs to affirm all of them. Not just 14 of them-- not just 14 of the 15, but all 15. So what does this imply? Well, it implies that there are secondary interpretations that are not essential to the pre-wrath, and people have to recognize that. They don't affect the core teaching of pre-wrath. For example pre-wrathers, we can disagree on, say for example, the identity of the two witnesses, and whether the two witnesses-- do they minister during the first or the second half of the seven year period? Most, including myself, hold that it is during the second half that they minister, but there can be-- this is-- I don't consider this a fundamental, essential, core issue. It doesn't affect the main thesis of pre-wrath.

Another secondary issue is the identity of the Babylonian harlot, or the identity of the restrainer. Even though many pre-wrathers affirm that the restrainer that Paul talks about in 2 Thessalonians 2, we believe that its Michael the Archangel that Paul is alluding back to, Daniel - a text where Michael the Archangel is the main character there, possessing a restraining ministry. But I don't consider-- Its not a definitional issue for pre-wrath. You can disagree on that. Whatever restraining agent the Father has chosen to restrain the Antichrist, it does not matter in the fundamental core of the pre-wrath; be that Michael, the Holy Spirit, the Son, the Gospel, the church. I've mentioned this in in that last point because there are people, I think, confused out there thinking they cannot be pre-wrath because they don't believe that the restrainer is Michael and that's just not the case.

Well, another secondary issue is whether one believes the beginning of birth pains are - the beginning birth pains that Jesus mentions to Matthew 24 - are they the same event as the first three or the first four seals? And even their timing. Some believe that the first three or four seals happened before the seven year period. Some believe they happened begin at the midpoint and most believe, such as myself, that, or at least the first three seals, they will happen during the first half of the seven year period. Whatever position you take, again, it doesn't affect-- These are secondary issues. It doesn't affect the pre-wrath position. There's freedom of disagreement among pre-wrathers on the secondary issues, and they are many of these non-essential interpretations. I'll just name a few more.

There's disagreement on the origin of the Antichrist figure. Will he be Islamic, European, Jewish or come from some other ethnicity or religion? Another issue is the different aspects of the structure of the Book of Revelation, or the timeline and events immediately happening after the seven year period is completed, such as when does the new Jerusalem-- Exactly when the new Jerusalem descends? The new earth, the new heaven occur? Does it happen at the beginning or the end of the millennium? And this first point that I'm prefacing, even though - these secondary issues - they vary in degree of importance - and they important, don't get me wrong - they are not, though, essential to the pre-wrath position. They are not definitional. There can - and are, obviously - disagreements on the conclusions of these secondary interpretations.

There is a second point I want to preface before I go through the essential tenets. I've heard not a few times from people that they are-- I've heard this expression. They are pre-wrath post-trib or post-trib, pre-wrath, whatever, either way, and when I hear this, for me, this doesn't make any sense because it's



contradictory. Because pre-wrath and post-trib positions have contradictory elements to them. So, you can be pre-wrath and post-trib at the same time, it just doesn't work that way. I mean, theological terms-- positions they have meaning. They have meaning and to say that someone is pre-wrath, post-trib kind of-- It doesn't have meaning, actually. I mean, the term post-tribulationism, it possesses a specific theological interpretation on the second coming of Christ. And likewise, the term pre-wrath denotes a different theological meaning on the second coming of Christ. I mean, to be sure, there is affinity between pre-wrath and post-trib, particularly that both interpretations we believe that the church will one day face the Antichrist persecution. And even on this last point, there are many post-tribs, particularly those from the historicists post-trib perspective, who do not even affirm a future literal Antichrist figure.

In fact, of the 15 tenets of the pre-wrath position that I'll be going over, the post-triber can only affirm 3, maybe 4, of the 15 tenants and many of the 15 pre-wrath tenets are in direct contradiction to the pre-wrath position. It's best that the so called "post trib, pre-wrath" label just should be jettisoned from the debate because it's confusing to the student prophecy who wants to learn about these issues and wants to wrap their brain around these issues. It's best to either affirm post-trib or pre-wrath, because one cannot affirm both at the same time in a meaningful sense of the term. If someone wants to be consistent, they can't do that. There is a third option, and that is for this person to come up with a whole new theological label to describe your idiosyncratic interpretation. I suppose one could do that, but I don't think it's honest to appropriate the term pre-wrath into ones', particularly, idiosyncratic view because it doesn't help. It just simply doesn't help. I understand the term pre-wrath is very popular these days and people-- I think that's one of the reasons why they're appropriating the term pre-wrath, but, again, I don't think that's honest and it's not accurate.

Let's begin with the first tenet of the pre-wrath position, and these are not in any necessary particular order although there is a roughly logical order to these 15 points. Number one: There is a future seven year period and, at the mid point of the seven year period, the Antichrist will be revealed and commit the abomination of desolation. In this shading, he has great tribulation against the church in Israel. That's number one. I realize there's a few statements in this first tenet and that's because these three events are inextricable in the pre-wrath interpretation. I mean, someone may object, for example, and claim that they deny future seven year period, but at the same time they'll say, "Well, I still believe even a future antchrist figure." Okay, fine, but that's not the pre-wrath position. That's, for example, many historical post-tribs actually believe that. That would be a post-trib, not a pre-wrath. In this future seven year period, obviously at the mid point, the Antichrist will be revealed and commit this abomination desolation and that's when the great tribulation begins, is at the mid point, against both the church in Israel, particularly against the remnant of Israel.

Number two: There is a biblical distinction between the Antichrist, great tribulation against the church in Israel and the day of the Lord's wrath against the ungodly. The latter event happens after the former event. Well, this is a very important tenet for the pre-wrath. This is something I stress all the time, this biblical distinction between the Antichrist great tribulation and the day of the the Lord's wrath. And both pre-tribs and post-tribs actually deny this, and I understand some post-tribs may have a certain version of it. It's really amorphous actually, and really hard to-- It seems like they kind of mix the great tribulation and the day of the Lord's wrath together, even though they recognize there is persecution within the day of the Lord, or something like that. But this is very important, because it helps - at least in my experience of working with pre-tribs and post-tribs - this is is a point where the light bulb comes on for them. Because when they see this, they recognize this distinction, it has resolved many difficulties in the pre-trib and post-trib scheme of their position. And notice it says that the later event happens before the former event, so there's no overlap. You don't have any part of the great tribulation happening during the day of the Lord's wrath. You don't have the day of the Lord's wrath happen during any part of the great tribulation. The great tribulation will happen first, then at some day or hour we do not know, it will be cut short - and that's another point later, I'm getting ahead of myself - and then you have the day of the Lord's wrath. That is point number two or tenet two.



Number three is the gathering of the elect, mentioned in Matthew 24:31, refers to the rapture - and I have a cross-reference here; Mark 13:27, Luke 21:28, Revelation 7:9-17 and 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, and 2 Thessalonians 2:1. So, the gathering of the elect mentioned in Matthew 24:31 refers to the rapture. You have to affirm this one - well, you have to affirm all of them - but you have to affirm this one because they're pre-wrath. So, in my book, Antichrist Before the Day of the Lord: What Every Christian Needs to Know about the Return of Christ, I have I have a major section in there giving four reasons why the gathering of the elect in Matthew 24:31 refers to the rapture. And, again, someone may say, "Wait a minute. Post-tribs also believes this." Yeah, that's true, but these, again, are necessary reasons - not each one is sufficient reasons - these are necessary reasons that you have to affirm to be pre-wrath. As I mentioned before, post-tribs can agree with about 3 of these 15, maybe 4 can be argued. But, again, the whole point of this is that all 15, if you affirm all 15 of these-- In other words, you can't say that you are pre-wrath if you don't affirm these. If someone says, "Hey, I don't believe the rapture happens. I don't believe the gathering of the elect in Matthew 24:31 is the rapture." Then, that's not pre-wrath. This is a core, essential tenet of pre-wrath.

Number four: At an unknown day and hour during the second half of the seven year period, the Antichrist's great tribulation will be cut short by the revelation of Christ to resurrect and rapture God's people, and this will be followed immediately by the day of the Lord's wrath, executed upon the ungodly. So, if you ever hear of anyone who says, "Well, pre-wrath teaches that the rapture will happen three-fourths into the seven year period," immediately your red flags should go up. They are woefully ignorant of the pre-wrath position or they are just intentionally misleading you. That's not what pre-wrath teaches. Pre-wrath affirms that the rapture will happen sometime during the second half of the seven year period. We don't know when, it's just going to be sometime during the second half. We don't know the day or the hour. It's not going to 75 days after the midpoint. We don't know that. Not exactly a year or two years - we just don't know. Jesus says we don't know the day or the hour. And I hear some people, "But yeah, we can know the year." I'm sorry, but if you're going to play around with God's words and the language that he's given us, that's something between you and God. If you don't get his message, the whole point is that you don't date set. You're going to be playing around with games, with Jesus' words, "Well, we don't know the day or the hour, but maybe we'll know the month. Maybe we'll know the year," then you're missing the whole point. You need to go back and repent if you're date setting.

We're not called to be date setters. We don't know the day or the hour. It's going to be sometime during the second half of the seven year period. Resist date setting and don't try to usurp the privy of the Father, thinking that you know better than the Father by date setting. Pre-wrathers do not date set. If you hear someone say that they're a pre-wrather and they're setting a date, or they're saying, "Well, we I don't know the date, but it is going to happen 75 days after the midpoint, or a year", they're not pre-wrath. They don't get pre-wrath and they're trying to peddle their own, again, idiosyncratic view in appropriating the popular term pre-wrath, so beware of those people.

Another element in the number four tenet is that the great tribulation is going to be cut short okay. That is, it it's not going to be three and a half years in duration. Yes, the second half is three and a half years in duration, but the great tribulation that begins at the midpoint is going to be cut short okay. I mean, it's shorter than the three and a half year period. So the day of the Lord's wrath it's going to begin when it's cut short and then the remaining three and a half years is going to the day of the Lord's wrath will run its course. So when the great tribulation is cut short, it's going to be cut short by the return of Christ to resurrect and rapture his people, then Christ will unleash his judgment upon this wicked world.

Number five: On the same day this rapture happens, the onset of the day of the Lord's wrath takes place just as it was in the days of Noah and Lot. You can find that in Luke 17: 22-37, and 2 Thessalonians 1: 5-10 - this concept of on the same day. So, pre-wrath links the deliverance event with the judgement event. So, the day that Christ returns to the clouds, he will first deliver God's people through the resurrection and the rapture, then, on that very same day, the day of the Lord's judgement will begin.



Number six: The second coming - the Greek term behind that is Parousia is-- it's not a simple, instantaneous event. Instead, the second coming is a complex whole event containing various purposes of God. Now, when I contrast simple with complex, I'm not talking about whether something is easy to understand or difficult to understand. By simple or complex, I'm talking about whether something is very defined, that would be very defined, multi-faceted - that would be a complex event - in contrast to something that's undefined and maybe one element or two elements within that. The second coming is going to be a defined, multi-faceted, complex whole, and this is where God will fulfill certain divine purposes during the second coming of His Son. Beginning with the revelation of his Son in the sky displaying his Shekinah glory - the power to the whole world - and resurrecting and rapturing God's people, followed by the day of the Lord's judgment upon the wicked and Antichrist's kingdom, restoring Israel to salvation, culminating in Christ's earthly reign. That is a complex, multi-faceted event.

When Christ comes back, he is going to be glorified. He's going to be glorified in contrast to post-trib interpretation and amillennial interpretation. They view the second coming as this-- its this undefined, amorphous event, almost like it's going to happen instantaneous and then "poof," we're ushered into eternity. No, no, no, no. That's not what the Bible teaches. The Biblical data conveys that this is not going to-- these events are not going to unfold in a single moment or a single day. Pre-wrath rejects that conception. The second coming, instead, conveys a complex multi-faceted course of prophetic events within the single comprehensive whole second coming. I love to use of the analogy of the first coming of Christ. I suppose Christ could have came back in his incarnation, he could have come to earth for one day and have been crucified in one day or something, and that's it. No, that's not what happened. But he could have, I guess. God as sovereign and could have chosen to-- that could have been the mechanism. But that wasn't the mechanism that the Father has chosen.

Christ, the first coming of Christ, the first Parousia happened over a 33-year course of time. The Father fulfills certain divine events within the Son. They were, of course, his birth, his growing up, his ministry, healing ministry, teaching ministry, the passion week with the crucifixion, the resurrection, and then eventually the ascension. Well, likewise, the second coming is also going to be this comprehensive, whole, complex defined event, and Christ is going to be glorified in these events. That's number six, is pre-wrath affirms a multi-faceted future, this complex whole second coming. We believe in one future second coming of Christ, but within that larger whole, the Son is going to have a number of redemptive actions in that.

Number seven: Although the battle of Armageddon is an element within the complex, multifaceted whole second coming, Armageddon does not initiate the Second Coming. Instead, the second coming begins between the sixth and the seventh seal. Boy, this is an important one, because there is a deep-seated assumption out there among pre-tribers and post-tribbers that they believe that the battle of Armageddon as depicted in Revelation 19 initiates the second coming, and that's just not the case. In the timeline of the events, the battle of Armageddon it happens much later, actually, after the second coming has already begun. It happens after the trumpet judgements and after the bowls judgement or at least just before the last bowl judgement is executed. I think people make this assumption that this second coming of Christ begins with Armageddon because, in Revelation 19, it's depicted with Christ-- It shows Christ in the sky. So, by that fact, I think they conclude that, "Oh, that's when the second coming happens". The context though, here - and again, I've written on this so I'm not going in to some full elaboration here - but the context, instead, when we look at the context, this is a judgement event, it's not a deliverance event. In fact, it is the people of God in glorified bodies who accompany Jesus at Armageddon.

When the second coming begins - when Paul talks about this at the beginning of the second coming - the disembodied souls of all of God's people - they don't have bodies, they're disembodied souls - they're coming to receive their bodies. Whereas the battle of Armageddon, they're coming with their bodies, they're accompanying Jesus because Jesus is coming to - not to deliver people, just the opposite - he's coming to judge people immediately. So, the battle of Armageddon that is-- and, again,



I've argued this in my book, Antichrist Before the Day of the Lord - pre-wrath places the beginning of the second coming between the sixth and the seventh seal. Indeed, the battle of Armageddon - it is part of the second coming, that's true - but this final battle will not occur until toward the end of the judgement elements and way after the resurrection rapture. The battle of Armageddon doesn't initiate the day of the Lord's judgement, it actually concludes it, if you want to be more accurate on that point.

Number eight: The resurrection rapture happens between the opening of the sixth seal and the seventh seal. I briefly mentioned this in the previous tenet, but here it's explicit. So, pre-wrath views the great multitude that no one can number in Revelation 7 as the people of God who are in their new glorified state where they've been raptured and now they're, they've been ushered before the throne of the Father.

Number nine - we'll move a little bit more quickly here. Number nine: The first six seals are not part of the day of the Lord's wrath, the first six seals are conditional events that must happen before Christ's return. That is the day of the Lord's wrath, it's not expressed in the first six seals. The first six seals are not God's wrath, and this leads me to tenet number ten.

The six seals portrayed in Revelation 6:12-17 signals the impeding day of the Lord's wrath. As we see it's also recorded in Joel 2:30-31, Matthew 24:29, Luke 21:25-26 and Mark 13:23-25. The six seals is not the wrath of God, rather it's a harbinger, it functions to portend the impending wrath which leads us to the next point.

Number 11: The seventh seal pronounces the day of the Lord's wrath. So, this seventh seal introduces the day of the Lord's wrath. It pronounces it - the judgement elements. And what are the judgement elements? Well, number 12. Tenet number 12 is the trumpets both and the battle of Armageddon contain, they realize, the execution of the day of the day of the Lord's wrath. This leads us to the next tenet on a sequential point, and this is very important.

Number 13: The trumpet, bowls and Armageddon will not happen before the seven seal is opened. Let me repeat that; the trumpets, bows and Armageddon will not occur before the seventh seal is opened. If anyone, if you hear anyone say that they place any of the trumpets, bowls or Armageddon before the seventh seal is open, they cannot be considered pre-wrath, by definition. Again, this is definitional. That doesn't make any sense for the pre-wrath position. And this is a particular post-trib interpretation, by the way, because, like I said earlier, post-tribs say they'll-- they think the battle of Armageddon is the beginning of the second coming and then some of them recognize that the rapture occurs between the sixth and the seventh seal, so what they do is they'll retroject the battle of Armageddon before the seventh seal. It's a strange reading, but you can't have that.

The pre-wrath interpretation views the judgement elements as unfolding consecutively, not concurrently. There's no recapitulation in the judgement elements before the seventh seal is open. You have to have the seventh seal open first before you any judgement elements, and the wording in this tenet number 13 is very important. There cannot be any trumpets, judgements, bowls or Armageddon occurring before the seventh seal is broken because the scroll has to be opened first. The scroll has to be opened before the contents are unleashed. Or, let me put it another way. Every trumpet, bowl, judgement, as well as the battle of Armageddon has to happen after the seventh seal is opened. So, if someone claims that the rapture happens at the seventh trumpet, they cannot be considered prewrath. Let me repeat that again [chuckles]. If someone says that the rapture happens at the seventh trumpet, there not pre-wrath. Period. I'm sorry. That's not pre-wrath. That's typically a post-trib view. If someone wants to believe that, then call themselves post-trib, not pre-wrath. That's not pre-wrath [chuckles]. The post-tribs typically take this concurrent view of the seals, trumpets, and bowl, and judgement. In my view, it's very deeply problematic interpretation because there's just no way getting around the explicit language in Revelation 8:1-6.

If you read Revelation 8:1-6, it indicates that the opening of the-- the function of the opening of the seventh seal, it causes the trumpet judgement to blown. Thats just logical right there. I'll just read two verses here. In Revelation 8:1-2, it says, "Now, when the Lamb opened the seventh seal, there was



silence in heaven for about a half an hour. Then I saw the seven angels who stand before God and seven trumpets were given to them." You can't get around this. I'm sorry [chuckles]. It's right there. The function of the seventh seal being opened is to introduce the trumpet. It's just a direct contradiction if someone says, "No, the trumpets were blown before the seventh seal is opened." A lot more could be said on this point, but-- I've actually written a full article on this. If you go to alankurshner.com/trumpets - that's plural, trumpets, alankurshner.com/trumpets - you can read my article on that point on and I'll leave the link in the show notes, as well.

Number 14 - we have 2 more to go. Paul's last trumpet, in 1 Corinthians 15:52, Paul calls it the last trumpet - this is not identified with the seven-trumpet judgment in the book of Revelations, and post-tribs do this all the time. They look at-- Post-tribs typically, just on a very surface level, they see the words "last" and "seven" and go, "Oh, they must be the same event." I'm sorry, that's just naïve. These are two entirely different events. The context clearly shows that these are two different events. One is a judgment event - the seventh trumpet - and the last trumpet mentioned in 1 Corinthians 15:52 is a deliverance event. It's a resurrection event. So, again, I've talked about this in my book, and I point people to that. The purpose of this show is not to argue every point. I'm just trying to outline these points.

The very last essential tenet is number 15. Christ return to resurrect and rapture God's people is not eminent - that is, any moment - because since discernible, prophesied events, must happen first. For example, the Antichrist revelation, and his ensuing great tribulation has to happen before the rapture. The apostasy, the coming of Elijah and the cluster of- These are discernible events, and the celestial disturbance event, as well. This cluster - say that 10 times really fast. The cluster of discernible celestial events, that has to happen first. So, you have these events, prophesied events, in the Bible that clearly teach that has to happen before the day of the Lord, and, of course, by extension, the rapture. And Christ can return - this is the last point of element in number 15 that Christ can return in any generation of the church.

This last point I know is a bit of a foregone conclusion. Why I mention this? Obviously, that's very obvious, I mean, given the other 14 points, but I've included it here just to emphasize. To emphasize that the so called teaching of immanency, it's not Biblical. The notion that Jesus can return at any moment is a relatively new teaching in the past couple of centuries where it's just been repeated so many times in different circles in the church that people just begin to think, "Oh, that's what the Bible teaches." No, it's a tradition that has been passed down the past few generations. Pre-wrath, instead, teaches that certain discernible events have to happen before the rupture and that Christ, he can return at any generation, during any generation, but not at any moment.

To wrap this up, to affirm the pre-wrath position in an honest and meaningful fashion, you have to affirm each of these 15 Tenets - not just 5, or 10, or 14 - all them. Because each one - here is the reason - each one is definitional. It defines pre-wrath on some important point. So, they're essential elements of pre-wrath eschatology. Again, these are the bare minimum - the bare minimum - that someone must affirm in order to be considered a pre-wrath in it's theological sense of the term and there is many secondary issues that people can disagree on, but these are the required points for the pre-wrath position. Again, the purpose of this episode was not to argue these points, but I just wanted to outline these 15 points. If you want to actually read some primary literature on the pre-wrath argumentation, I would recommend my book, Antichrist Before the Day of the Lord: What Every Christian Needs to Know about the Return of Christ.

Well, I hope this has been helpful and clarifying for you. Feel free to send me some feedback. I can't reply to every email I receive, but I do read them all. Thank you for listening.

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