

Lessons From A Storm

Introduction

- I. On Monday, August 29, 2005 Hurricane Katrina slammed into the Gulf Coast with 145-mph winds, bringing in one of the worst national disasters in our nation's history.
 - A. Though the number of people killed in the initial storm appears to have been fairly small, the death toll is still rising from the storm's aftermath.
 - B. When the levees around New Orleans broke, the crisis reached epic proportions—it looked like something out of a Hollywood disaster movie.
 - C. We saw men and women being plucked off their rooftops by Coast Guard helicopters, and thousands of other people wading through filthy water.
 - D. Hundreds of thousands of our fellow citizens are now classified as "refugees," a phrase I find hard to associate with American citizens.
- II. There are normally 30 to 100 tropical storms per years, and about 15% of those happen in the Caribbean.
 - A. Hurricanes play a visible role in the circulation of the atmosphere.
 - B. They transport large amounts of warm, moist air to middle latitudes.
 - C. Living in Illinois, most of us probably pay little attention to such storms.
 - D. Hurricanes normally have little impact on our lives—last week was different.
 - E. As you watched the news last week, what observations did you make?

Discussion

I. The Value Of Human Life

- A. Satan was wrong when he said, "Skin for skin! Yes, all that a man has he will give for his life" (Job 2:4).
 1. Last week we saw so many incredible images of people risking their own lives to save other—starting with the US Coast Guard, and then policemen, firemen, sailors, soldiers and Marines.
 2. I am glad we live in a society where the majority of people still value human life.
 3. I am also thankful that we live in a land where the members of our nation's military are willing to risk life and limb to save those who are least able to care for themselves—it is not that way in so many countries.
- B. One of the most touching stories was that of Hardy Jackson who, while still under great emotional stress, was interviewed by ABC from Mobile, AL.
 1. The reporter, Leigh Sales, asked Mr. Jackson what happened.
 2. At first he simply said, "The house just split in half."
 3. Then he added, "We got up in the roof, all the way to the roof, and water came and the house just opened up, divided..."
 4. The reporter asked who was in the house with him and he said his wife.
 5. The reporter asked where she was now and Jackson said, "Can't find her body. She's gone."
 6. The reporter asked, "You can't find your wife?"
 7. Jackson said, "No. She's gone. I held her hand as tightly as I could and she told me, you can't hold me. She said take care of the kids, and the grandkids, and my kids..."

8. When the reporter asked Jackson where he was going, he said, "We got nowhere to go, nowhere to go—I'm lost. That's all I had. That's all I had."
 9. You could see the reporter wiping the tears from her eyes, all the while knowing there was nothing she could do.
- C. What do you suppose was going through the minds of those people during the storm and it's aftermath?
1. Do you think they were worrying about their retirement plans?
 2. Were they concerned about where the New Orleans Saints would play football this season?
 3. I've talked with a lot of people in the final hours of their lives—in situations where we both knew the end was near.
 4. People in that situation often share their personal regrets about life.
 5. I have never met a single man who wished he had spent more time on the job, mowing the yard, fishing or playing golf.
 6. Most men go their graves wishing they had spent more time with their wife and kids—it is so sad that they learn that lesson too late.
- D. Why is that in such disasters we are prone to think of how it affects us?
1. No one likes to think of high gas prices.
 2. There have already been shortages in our area.
 3. Are you more concerned about the price of a gallon of unleaded or the suffering of your fellow man?
- E. Do we take "our daily bread" for granted (Matt. 6:11)?
1. Thousands of people in New Orleans would have given almost anything to be able to eat the leftovers you through in the garbage last week.
 2. Do you realize how much God has blessed you?
 3. Do you realize how much you need to depend on God?
- F. As valuable as human life is, there is something greater (Matt. 16:26).

II. Being Warned Of The Danger Is Not Enough

- A. You went to bed on Saturday night knowing Katrina was on the way.
1. Last Sunday morning in this building brethren prayed for the safety of residents along the Gulf Coast.
 2. Two days before the storm hit the coast, President Bush signed the papers declaring a state of emergency along the coast.
 3. The Governor of Louisiana and the Mayor of New Orleans urged people, with the strongest words possible, to flee from the coast.
 4. Some people couldn't—they were dirt poor and had no transportation.
 5. Those that could leave left their homes and businesses and formed incredible lines of traffic on the Interstate heading out of the area.
 6. But, you also saw some people bragging that they had withstood other hurricanes, such as Camille, Andrew, Ivan or Charley.
 7. You have to wonder how many of those people died last week, and how many are wishing they had heeded the warning.
 8. Being warned of the danger is not enough—you have to heed the warnings!

- B. We all know the Judgment Day is coming—the danger is real.
 1. Are you one of those who ignore the danger? (2 Pet. 3:1–7).
 2. If you ignore the warnings about the Judgment, you will call on the rocks and mountains to hide you from the face of God (cf. Rev. 6:12–17).

III. The Need Of Prayer

- A. In times of distress, it is a great blessing to address our Heavenly Father on behalf of ourselves and others (1 Pet. 5:7; Phil. 4:6–7).
- B. There is great power in prayer (Luke 18:1; cf. 2 Kings 20:1–6).
- C. Let us pray for our nation and our leaders (1 Tim. 2:1–2).

IV. Human Nature: Good And Bad

- A. In the midst of this great national disaster we were appalled by the acts of violence from hoodlums in New Orleans.
 1. Examples of looting, rapes, murder, and assaults on police.
 2. New Orleans looked like a third world country after a revolution.
 3. In 1917 Theodore Roosevelt wrote an article titled, *Going To Church*.
 - a) The article was published in *Ladies' Home Journal*.
 - b) I do not have the time here to read the entire article, but will note his first paragraph.
 - c) "In this actual world a churchless community, a community where men have abandoned and scoffed at or ignored their religious needs, is a community on the rapid downgrade. It is perfectly true that occasional individuals or families may have nothing to do with church or with religious practices and observances and yet maintain the highest standard of spirituality and of ethical obligation. But this does not affect the case in the world as it now is, any more than that exceptional men and women under exceptional conditions have disregarded the marriage tie without moral harm to themselves interferes with the larger fact that such disregard if at all common means the complete moral disintegration of the body politic."
 - d) The entire article can be found in Bill Bennett's masterpiece, *The Book of Virtues*.
 - e) New Orleans was known around the world for its vices—many of which were practiced with the approval of their political leaders.
 4. The Bible speaks of such evil men (2 Tim. 3:13).
 5. It would be easy to spend a lot of time dwelling on the actions of a few evil people, but that is not the whole story.
- B. Last week we also saw the goodness of the American people.
 1. As bad as this hurricane was, imagine if this would have happened in a third world country.
 - a) Within a few hours of the disaster, money and supplies were being gathered from all over the nation to assist our fellow-countrymen.
 - b) Some of you work for employers who immediately, without prodding, started sending medical supplies to the Gulf Coast.

2. What about all of the countries this nation has helped in the past?
 - a) We did not help them for what we would get in return.
 - b) We helped them because we are a decent people.
 - c) Over 40 nations are now sending help: Sweden, Canada, England, Jamaica, and Honduras, even France.
3. The church of our Lord is not a social welfare organization.
 - a) The New Testament gives examples of brethren sending financial assistance to needy saints (Acts 11:27–30).
 - b) We are commanded to help those in need (Gal. 6:10; Jam. 2:14–16).
 - c) We will be judged by how we treat others (Matt. 25:41–45).
4. There are many organizations that are raising funds to assist others.
 - a) The Red Cross has raised thousands of volunteers—it is the largest mobilization they have ever done for any single natural disaster.
 - b) I would like to ask you not only to donate to the relief of those on the Gulf Coast; I want to challenge you to sacrifice for this cause.
 - c) Did you see those people at the Superdome?
 - (1) Did you see the blank look on the faces of all involved?
 - (2) Can you imagine what it would be like to lose everything you own in the world, and then find yourself in other city, without any identification, money, credit cards, job or transportation?

Conclusion

- I. Do you remember when Jesus rebuked the wind? (Mark 4:35–41).
 - A. Jesus rebuked both the wind and the sea.
 - B. The sudden ceasing of the wind would not have immediately calmed the sea—it would only have settled after a period of time.
 - C. He showed His power over nature, and my friend, He still has that power.
 - D. I am convinced that if our Lord were physically there on the Gulf Coast in the face of that category 5 hurricane, He could have quietly said, “Peace, be still,” and there would have been a great calm.
- II. I said it Wednesday night, and will say it again now, God is still on His throne!
- III. Benjamin Franklin, speaking at the Philadelphia Constitutional Convention in 1787, “I have lived sir, a long time, and the longer I live, the more convincing proofs I see of this truth—that God governs in the affairs of men. If a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without His notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without His aid? We have been assured, sir, in the sacred writings, that ‘except the Lord build a house they labor in vain that build it.’”
- IV. “When I shut up heaven and there is no rain, or command the locusts to devour the land, or send pestilence among My people, if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land” (2 Chron. 7:13–14).