

The Only Hope In The Coming Storm



David Wilkerson October 3, 2011

God promised the prophet Zechariah that in the last days he would be a protective wall of fire around his people: "For I, saith the Lord, will be unto her a wall of fire round about" (Zechariah 2:5).

Isaiah also testifies to this: "For thou hast been a...shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall" (Isaiah 25:4). "There shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the daytime from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain" (4:6).

These promises are meant to comfort us as "prior warnings." You see, all the prophets warn of a great storm coming in the final days. And this storm will beat against God's wall of protection with ferocity.

Jesus says the coming storm will be so frightful and overwhelming that people's hearts will fail them as they see it forming (see Luke 21:26). If Jesus says this storm is going to be ferocious we can know it will be an awesome moment in history. Yet the Bible assures us God never sends judgment on any society without first revealing to his prophets what he plans to do: "Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets" (Amos 3:7).

What a marvelous expression of our Lord's great love for his people. If you study the biblical prophets' writings carefully you'll see that God acts this way consistently. Just prior to any impending storm of judgment, the Lord always commands his prophets to warn the people to return to him: "I have also spoken by the prophets, and I have multiplied visions...by the ministry of the prophets" (Hosea 12:10).

Moreover, God is faithful to speak in times of prosperity, just before the fury of his judgment strikes. While the storm clouds are still gathering he raises up prophetic voices all over the land. And, according to Scripture, whenever a sinful nation was prosperous and at peace, God told his prophets to warn that the good times soon would end: "The Lord hath cried by the former prophets, when Jerusalem was inhabited and in prosperity" (Zechariah 7:7).

At times God made his message strong, instructing his spokesmen to make their warnings searing.

He said through Hosea, "Therefore have I hewed them by the prophets; I have slain them by the words of my mouth" (Hosea 6:5). God was saying, in essence: "The word I send you will be so clear it will smite you if your heart is open at all. It will cause you to fall on your face and repent." We are always to keep this in mind: God's purpose in lovingly calling us back to himself is to protect us in such times of storm. Yet often in biblical history when he gave these warnings the people refused to listen: "He sent prophets to them, to bring them again unto the Lord; and they testified against them: but they would not give ear" (2 Chronicles 24:19).

Almost always, God's people grew weary of these warnings. This was especially true if a prophet cried out about a coming storm over a period of years and that society continued to be prosperous and at peace. Over time the people began to switch off the prophet's voice. They simply didn't want to hear it anymore.

We see this in Israel's response to the prophet Isaiah. The people told him, "Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits" (Isaiah 30:10).

Can you imagine ever falling to such a condition? These people knew Isaiah was telling the truth—that a great storm was coming—but they got tired of hearing about it. They preferred to hear “smooth things.” The Hebrew word for “smooth” here means “pleasant, unperturbed.” They were telling Isaiah, in other words, “Don’t preach anything to us that will upset the status quo or make us nervous.”

This very condition has crept into the church of Jesus Christ. Believers who have been devoted to Jesus for years now turn on their television sets only to see more horrible reports of violence, disasters, hunger, crime, immorality. After a while, their minds become satiated with all the bad news and their hearts become hardened to it. To them, even the worst news report is “just another news story.”

I often wonder: Can anything move us anymore? We’ve already heard every type of bad news we could possibly hear. What disaster or calamity is left to shock us?

Beloved, God is appalled by this kind of response among his people! We see this in the warnings of the prophet Ezekiel. At the time Ezekiel prophesied, Israel was prosperous and at peace with the surrounding nations. Yet the Lord told Ezekiel to give the people this message: “I will lay the land most desolate, and the pomp of her strength shall cease; and the mountains of Israel shall be desolate...because of all their abominations which they have committed” (Ezekiel 33:28-29).

The prophet went up and down the land preaching God’s warnings over several years. But the people grew weary of listening to him. Over all that time not one of Ezekiel’s words had come to pass. On the contrary, the nation only grew more prosperous.

At some point Ezekiel’s prophecies became a source of entertainment for the people. They began calling him names behind his back: “doomsday preacher,” “the man who never smiles,” “Mr. bad news.” Ezekiel finally got fed up and said, “Lord, you’ve deceived me. Nothing you told me has come to pass. Now everyone is mocking me!”

“(Israel is) saying, Come, I pray you, and hear what is the word that cometh forth from the Lord. And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness...they hear thy words, but they do them not. And when this cometh to pass, (lo, it will come) then shall they know that a prophet hath been among them” (Ezekiel 33:30-33).

Have you come to the place where you have said in your heart, “I’ve already heard it all. I don’t want to hear any more”? If so, beware.

As it was with all past societies and believing bodies, the church today is in no mood to receive bad news.

The majority of churchgoers today soundly reject all prophetic warnings of a coming storm. Indeed, the American church is the most blatant “feel good” church in all of history. But, like Israel, we are only experiencing the calm before the storm.

While Moses spent forty days on the mountaintop, Israel indulged in a spirit of lawlessness. The people wanted to play and relax, so they abandoned all godliness. You remember the result. It ended in a drunken, naked orgy around a golden calf.

Likewise today, Christians by the multiple thousands are casting off the yoke of Christ, tossing aside all limits and restrictions. This attitude is prevalent in many Christian books and magazines. It’s almost as if our leaders are saying, “Relax, God isn’t hard. He’s our Daddy, we’re his kids, and we’re all meant to have a good time. Don’t let anyone disturb your fun.” How could that ever be the work of the Holy Spirit?

Indeed, the Bible says a time is coming when God’s people will no longer blush. And right now, the church’s blush is gone because we have seen and heard so much already. Yet this is just the beginning.

“Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord” (Amos 8:11). Notice this verse doesn’t say there will be a famine of preaching. God would never hold back his warnings from his church, because only his truth can set us free.

No, Amos's prophecy is not about all the shallow, light preaching we hear today. Rather, what the church today is experiencing is a famine of *hearing*. There is an unwillingness to hear the true Word of God. Instead, people are closing their eyes and ears, hardening their hearts and saying, "I don't want to hear any more."

I believe right now we are experiencing the calm prior to the greatest storm America has ever suffered.

Before the current recession in America, I received letters from Christians saying, "You've been prophesying for years about 'gathering storm clouds' and a 'coming crash.' Yet all you've done is scare a lot of Christians who trust your word. The truth is the opposite has happened. Instead of experiencing a storm we've seen a boom with record-breaking prosperity. There isn't one sign on the horizon to suggest a coming crisis." This was all before the real estate crash that sent economic shock waves all over the globe.

The apostle Peter predicted that many believers would have the same attitude as these scoffers: "There shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation" (2 Peter 3:3-4). In other words: "People will say, 'Where is the so-called storm? Everything is continuing today as it always has.'"

This is the very reason God tells his prophets to shout their warnings from the housetops. He wants to warn his people, to stir us up to seek him. He wants to convict us of our attempts to cast off Christ's yoke and cozy up to the world. He wants us to keep our eyes on Jesus, to seek heavenly things, because those are the only things that will stand when the storm winds begin to blow.

Now let me give you the only hope in the coming storm.

Just before his death and resurrection Jesus stared into the face of a horrible coming storm. He saw what was just ahead: Jerusalem would be surrounded by powerful armies, the temple would be destroyed, the city would be burned to the ground, and thousands would die on crosses erected by the invading enemy. The Jews' entire society as they knew it was about to collapse.

We know Jesus was the very embodiment of God's love. And yet he warned, prophesied and wept over his society because he saw what was coming: "Then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved" (Matthew 24:21-22).

If you think about it, Jesus' day was very similar to ours. Peace and calm ruled. Children played in the streets. But Jesus described his society as a generation of vipers: priests who robbed widows, scoffers, blasphemers, adulterers, child offenders, a corrupt church full of moneychangers, a ministry filled with wolves in sheep's clothing, false accusers, liars, cheats, hypocrites, lovers of pleasure, fornicators. Christ warned, "A terrible storm is coming. Now prepare your hearts."

When I first prepared this message, I was overwhelmed by a spirit of foreboding. All I could think of was the church's terrible condition and how the devil was using subtle evils to deceive God's elect. Christians seemed focused mostly on their own needs—"my needs, my problems, my past, my future—how my friends have failed me, how the church has wounded me." God's people were no longer weeping over a dying world.

For a while this tragic fact over-whelmed me. Then the Holy Spirit showed me how our Lord reacted in the face of the coming storm. The apostle John writes, "As he is, so are we in this world" (1 John 4:17). We simply have to have Jesus' mindset in all things. If we don't our hearts will fail us.

The Bible gives no evidence of Christ being downcast, fearful or hopeless. He didn't panic or despair. In spite of all he saw coming Jesus knew the final outcome. He knew the gates of hell would not prevail against God's people.

David gives us a clear picture of Jesus' attitude in the face of the coming storm. He speaks prophetically of Christ, saying, "I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved" (Acts 2:25). "For David speaketh concerning him" (same verse).

Indeed, David quoted Jesus as saying, "Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope" (verse 26). Here is the secret: *Jesus kept the Father always before his face*. The literal

meaning here is, “I was always in his presence, beholding his face.” Jesus continually sought out secret places to be shut in with his Father. And it was only after being in God’s presence that Christ came forth to minister, fully persuaded his Father was always with him: “He is at my right hand, and nothing on this earth can move me!” The Greek word for “moved” here means “agitated or shaken, disturbed.” Jesus was saying, “None of these problems, evils or coming events can cast me down or shake my confidence. My Father is in complete control.”

Beloved, if we’re going to face the coming storm, then we need to be prepared so nothing disturbs our spirit. The only way to do that is to spend time in the Father’s presence, beholding his face. We have to be shut in with him—on our knees, practicing his presence, seeking him—until we are thoroughly persuaded he’s at our right hand.

God is clearly telling us, “Don’t be moved or agitated by anything you see. Keep your eyes focused on me and you will retain your joy.” According to David, Jesus testified, “Thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance” (Acts 2:28).

It is as if Christ is telling us, “I faced everything you’re going to face in the closing days of time. I had the same foreboding feelings because I saw the coming storm. But I ran into the presence of my Father and he lifted all my concerns. He showed me the outcome of it all. And in his presence I found all the joy, hope and rest I would ever need, to the very end. I have peace and joy because I’ve been with him.” “My flesh shall rest in hope” (2:26).

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