

Wow!!! WHAT A DAY!!! - HURRICANE IAN

Most of you know that I live in the Fort Myers area of Florida. And, as you all know, we just went through a horrific experience as we went through Hurricane Ian. Many of you live in this area. As of now, most of you should be able to get internet and have your water and electricity. However, unfortunately, I know that many of you do not. The crews are working very hard to get both the water and electricity running and going to as many people as they can and as fast as they can.

Unfortunately, many in the Ft Myers Beach, Sanibel and Captiva areas along with Pine Island and Matlacha are going to be dealing with much more than the water and electricity. In the other counties such as Charlotte they are still dealing with some rivers that are going to crest either today or tomorrow because of the tremendous amount of rain that fell with the storm. Their water and electricity are also coming back - very slowly. Most importantly are those who may have lost their lives in the storm throughout Southwest Florida. We are keeping those and their families in our prayers.

For those who are not from this region, let me tell you, the news stations outside of Florida cannot even begin to tell you what took place on that day and in the aftermath. When we finally got our electricity back, (about a week later) I was able to turn on the network shows and I had watched the morning network "news" shows. They mentioned a blurb about the difficulties we were experiencing and then went on to some other silly nonsense. I am sure we "may have been news" for a few days but after that it was time for them to "move on." I turned them off real quick and I haven't looked at them since.

Forgive me; that was what it seemed like to me. The network news shows reported it and simply went on to something else. The local news media however, I think have been doing a great job in giving out information that is needful to all the people in the area. The government agencies, all the non-profit agencies, and the countless people who are truly helping their neighbors, are doing great things to help and assist in these times of need.

I have been volunteering at a local non-profit agency who has been giving out food, clothing and other needful items to the hard hit families and area of Harlem Heights which is near where Trish and I live. People are so very desperate for anything that you give them and they are so very thankful, as well. We have also been helping those in our own neighborhoods with their roofs as well as others who were, and still are, in need of just a helping hand.

As for the storm, let me tell you.... I was trying to stay calm because I knew that Trish was getting a little bit nervous as we were going through it. But... let me tell you, I was a little nervous myself. We had stayed in our house. There did come a time, in the beginning of the storm when Trish and I got the two cats and brought them into one of the rooms and shut the door. When we did that, we really began to pray.

It got pretty bad. The storm was so long. After about 1½ - 2 hours we came out of the room and we looked around. Everything was still intact. Then the wind started to come from the other direction. We immediately changed rooms and we got into our living room area which was on the other side of the house. The second part of the storm came and it seemed much stronger and lasted very much longer.

I believe the wind and the rain in the first part of the storm lasted for about 6 hours before it really picked up and began to blow even stronger for, as had mentioned, another 1½ to 2 hours. Then, as I said, the second part of the storm came and lasted about another 6 hours - but it blew even harder. Thank God we had our shutters up on the windows.

However, there was a time when even the shutters by our dining room glass sliding doors started to get loose and the bottoms were starting to blow out. We were so blessed that we saw them starting to blow. We got some wire and we were able to secure the bottom of the shutters to our refrigerator and our dining room table. That held them in place for the rest of the storm.

I think it was about 8:00pm that day when I think it began to get a little bit less windy and rainy. Trish and I looked at each other and I think that is when we thought we can begin to think that we made it. At about 11:00pm we were so tired and the water, lights and electricity were off that we ended up falling asleep. The effects of the storm, from the very beginning to the end, had lasted at least about 18-20 hours.

We woke up the next morning and it had all cleared up. The sun was coming through the clouds. However, when I looked out my front door (because that was the only opening we had to the front of the house) we saw that there was a flood of water up to our front door. It did not come into the house but it was close. We were not even close to the shoreline. However, as I said, it did not come into the house and it began to recede. It did rise up again at the next high tide time but it did not come into the house. We had made it!!!

Jesus gave a parable that was very similar to what we had experienced. It is found in Matthew 7:24-27. It is found at the conclusion of what we refer to as the "Sermon on the Mount." This was Jesus' first major teaching. Not even all of His disciples were there yet. They may have been there but they were not called His disciples, as of yet.

As we read Matthew 5-7, we hear Jesus speak of many different things concerning being a true child of God. He teaches us concerning the "beatitudes" (the blessings of living a Godly lifestyle), the real meaning of the Law and of giving true alms as well as many other things. It was Jesus' introductory teaching to what His ministry was going to be presenting for the next 3½ years until His crucifixion and then His resurrection.

Jesus concludes this most important time of teaching with these words as found in Matthew 7:24-27. Let's read what He tells us: *"Therefore whosoever hears these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: ²⁵ and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. ²⁶ And every one that hears these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: ²⁷ And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it."*

Notice, what Jesus says as He predicates this parable. He tells us, *"Therefore whosoever **hears** these sayings of mine, and **does them**..."* The key words in this whole section of scripture are those that tell us that it is one thing to hear the words that Jesus taught but it is more important that we **do what Jesus taught**. This is so very important for anyone who listens and hears Jesus and His teachings. They are not just philosophical words but they are words to live by. They are the Words of Life.

Jesus then concludes, in parable form, this time of teaching with two very distinct aspects. The first one is, *"...a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: ²⁵ and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock."* Jesus tells us about the "wise man..."

The word "wise" comes from the Greek word "*phronimos*," which means to be prudent and mindful. Jesus is referring to the listener who is wise enough to truly know that Jesus indeed does know exactly what He is talking and telling us about. You are wise if you not only listen to Jesus' words but most importantly, you believe and then go and do what Jesus tells us to do.

This is so vital to the true child of God. We must not simply listen to the words that Jesus spoke and taught, but we most importantly must go, do and live those words from out of our lives. If we listen, go and do the words that Jesus taught than our lives will be as that man whose house was built upon a “rock.” The “rock” that Jesus was truly referring to, was the “*Rock of our salvation*” – our Heavenly Father and His Word.

Notice, Jesus tells us that even when we do listen and follow His teachings, the “rains” will come; the “floods” will come; the “winds will blow.” Yes, regardless of what anyone preaches or tells us in these days that we are living in, being a true child of God will be difficult. The true child of God will go through much persecution and they will go through very difficult times. We may not have dealt with it much so far but it will be coming and it has truly already begun in many ways and in many parts of the world.

However, Jesus is very clear in teaching us that those who follow after Him and all of His teachings will **never fall**. This means that we will not fall into the grips of satan and all of his lies and deceptions. Rather, it reveals to the true believer that they will not fall but rather they will rise up and be that true child of God that Jesus just taught the people about in that “Sermon on the Mount.” He is still telling this to us today as we read, live and walk in His words.

We see that Jesus goes on and teaches us that those who hear His words but who do not follow after His words are “foolish” people. This word “foolish” does not simply mean that these people will be silly and simply just not follow after His ways and His Word but rather it refers to those who truly hear His words and then purposely **choose not** to follow after and do what He teaches.

In the Greek, the word “fool” or “foolish” is referring to a person who is rebellious and stiff-necked and is a person who continues in their own way regardless of what God, the Father or Jesus says or teaches them. Just like most of the religious leaders who were listening to Jesus but who refused to truly “hear.”

Notice, what Jesus tells us what will happen to those individuals who hear His Word and who does not follow after and do what He teaches and who do not follow what the true Word of God teaches. Jesus tells us that, “... *that house*” will be built upon “*sand*.” This is referring to a faulty foundation and one that will never last. It will never stand up against the coming rains, floods and winds of trials and persecution.

It will be those people who will fall and, “...*and great was the fall of it.*” Wow!!! Did you read that? Jesus tells us that “...*great will be its fall.*” What will their “**great**” fall be? Well, they will “fall into” a place called hell and then, ultimately, into the “Lake of Fire.”

I encourage every believer to take their faith in the One, True God very seriously. We are living in perilous times. Not simply with the winds, the rains and the floods that come our way in natural disasters such as what happened and is still going on during and after Hurricane Ian here in Florida. No, we are living in even greater and even more perilous times.

We all must heed what Jesus told us throughout His ministry. We must follow after the teachings and encouragements as found in all of the New Testament writings as well as the great moral aspects of the Law that are in the Jewish Scriptures, the Old Testament. We must be ready for what is coming our way as fore told in the book of Revelation.

Yes, we must be ready. Honestly, we were never truly “ready” for the hurricane that came our way. We did the best we could. We prepared the best way we could. We did not know what was exactly going to happen but when it did come – we were as ready as we could be – and we made it through. That is the same way with our faith and with our God. We can never be truly ready for all the things that will come prior to His return.

However, the scriptures are there and they are very clear as to what we should at least be expecting. As with the hurricane we can be as “prepared” as possible but we must always be ready for the things we may not be so ready for. God has already declared that we will never know the exact time of Jesus’ coming and we will never know all the exact things that will need to take place prior to that time. We just need to know that we must be ready for any and all things that may occur!!!

The most important thing that the Word tells us is that we must continually be “watchful,” prepared and on guard for everything that will come our way in preparation for that day of Jesus’ return. In Matthew 25:13 at the conclusion of the Parable of the Ten Virgins we are told, “**Watch** therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man comes.” After that teaching, Jesus went on to tell us the parable of the Talents and then He went on to tell us about “The Judgment.” We find this all in Matthew 25. Will we be ready?

Well, just as with the hurricane, Trish and I were as ready as we could be. It was an interesting day. But... we made it through. I pray that we would be also as ready and prepared for that day when Jesus returns. The scriptures reveal to us what the “sign of the times” will be for when Jesus does return. They tell us much better than any weather person could foretell when and where a storm may hit. I am encouraging all of us to get back to the scriptures and prepare ourselves for the soon return of our King, our Lord and our Savior – Jesus Christ, the Messiah, the King of kings, the Lord of lords, the Son of the Living God.

*“**Watch** therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man comes.”*

- Matthew 25:13