

Be Ye Ready

Sermon #0636

Study by W. D. Frazee—July 6, 1957

I want to read a newspaper article describing the terrible hurricane that hit Southwestern Louisiana a few days ago. Most of you are familiar with the report, but I think it will be worthwhile for us to meditate on it this morning. This article was written July 2.

"Mounting misery. Slow storm cleanup. Mass burial held for part of victims. Latest death toll estimate is five hundred.

"Mass removal and hurricane dead from the ravaged gulf coast in Louisiana went on today, but mounting misery beset cleanup workers and slowed their progress. It is well nigh impossible for even the strongest of men to stay in the place, much less work.

"The hurricane, first of the season, brought a hundred five mile an hour winds and twenty foot storm waves to Western Louisiana and Eastern Texas. Although the storm long since had moved on and died out, the havoc of its passage was not yet solved. Damage to crops, buildings, and livestock was incalculable.

"As the seemingly endless procession of dead moved north from the coast, mass burials got underway late yesterday. A big crane lifted forty-seven handmade pine coffins into part of a hundred-fifty foot trench. Health authorities called the area uninhabitable for perhaps as long as three weeks. As late as yesterday survivors were being found afloat in receding flood waters.

"Cammoran, once a village of three thousand persons lacked fresh water, sewage facilities, means to refrigerate food, electricity, and protection from multiplying hordes of mesquites. Rats and poisonous snakes held sway in the wreckage. Pestilence, typhoid, tetanus, and malaria was a lurking menace.

"Many of the search parties were armed against swarms of poisonous cotton-mouth moccasins washed up from the marshes. Sheriff O. B. Carter of Cammoran parish sent out a party of hunters yesterday to shoot out a particularly large swarm of snakes."

Speaking of the one doctor there:

"Searchers have still not found his three babies. His wife spends most of her time in bed recovering from the beating she received when she floated eighteen hours in the raging flood waters. His oldest son suffers with nightmares, and their home, once the show place of Cammoran is gone."

It is the closing words of this newspaper article that I want you to especially notice:

"In Washington a coast guard officer said many of the persons killed by the hurricane would be alive today if they had heeded warnings to flee their homes. Commander James Shrader, coast guard search and rescue officer in New Orleans told a press conference the weather bureau warned of the hurricane thirty-six hours in advance, and pinpointed to the hour its arrival time, fourteen hours before it hit. Most people had plenty of time to find a safe place. They simply refused to leave their homes."

As someone handed me this newspaper article the other day, I looked at it and said there is a sermon in that story. I suppose I could close and you could go home with several important thoughts, some earnest warnings.

"Therefore be ye also ready" Matthew 24:44.

They had a warning of the exact time the hurricane would hit. But this text says that in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh. We have been warned of His coming, but we have not been told the exact hour as they had. But do you know what our great danger is? Our great danger is just like these folks here. They didn't move because they had hurricane warning before. This isn't the first time a storm had hit the gulf. It is probably the first time one that bad hit that particular locality.

I was reading about an old man off the gulf coast who had lived there for years. After the hurricane he said, "We have never seen the water go over this island, but it went over this time." This was unprecedented as far as that locality was concerned. That is why they said they would sit this one out. It will rain pretty hard and the wind will blow pretty bad, but we had rather be here in our homes when it is over. So they stayed.

Hundreds of them are in mass graves this morning. Most of them could have been alive and well if they had just heeded the warning to get out.

"A storm is coming, relentless in its fury. Are we prepared to meet it?" *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 8, page 315.

Noah told the people about a great storm that was coming back in his day. But he told them about it so long that when the time came to leave their homes and get into the ark they said no. They perished in the flood. Jesus says:

"But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away" Matthew 24:37-39.

This storm down on the gulf coast is one more sign of the near approach of the coming of our Lord.

"And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring" Luke 21:25.

A hundred-five mile an hour wind, a twenty foot wave. Can you see it coming? Can you hear it? The sea and the waves roaring. And the echo of that thundering noise as it reaches our ears is to awaken in our minds and arouse in our hearts the firm conviction that the coming of Jesus is near, even at the door.

That need not be a thought of terror to us. It should be a thought of peace, relief, blessing. As long as we are in this old world one trouble after another will come. There is no release except the coming of Jesus. That is the answer.

But I come back to this danger. Why was it so many of them perished down there a few days ago? They didn't listen to the warnings. They didn't heed the warnings. They didn't do something about it. They thought it wouldn't be as bad as they say it will. We have had warnings before.

"Some are looking too far off for the coming of the Lord. Time has continued a few years longer than they expected; therefore they think it may continue a few years more, and in this way their minds are being led from present truth, out into the world. In these things I saw great danger" *Early Writings*, page 58.

I pray that the Lord will help every mind here to be alert this morning. If any of you are inclined to be drowsy, I suggest you do something that will wake you up. It was while men slept that the enemy sowed tares.

Some are looking too far off for the coming of the Lord. Is there anybody here who was expecting the Lord to come forty years ago? Time has gone on longer than you expected it to. And time has gone on longer than some of you expected who began looking for the coming of Jesus later than forty years ago.

Because of that some people think it may continue a few years more. That is like it was in the days of Noah. Here is a boy who came running in. He says, Daddy, do you know what I saw today? Way over on the other side of the mountain I saw a man building a great building. He was talking, and he said there was a great flood coming. Daddy, we ought to get ready so we can go into that ark.

Daddy said, Son, never mind. I heard that when I was a boy too. I was over in that valley one time. I heard that. But here I am grown up. I have a family. There is no flood around. The sky is just as clear as it was when I was a boy. There is no rain. The rivers are where they always have been. Never mind, son.

Daddy, did you really hear that when you were a boy? And it never has happened?

Is that what is going on today, friends? Did our grandfathers hear that Jesus was coming right away? And our fathers are hearing, and our children are hearing. In these things I see great danger.

What is the answer? "Therefore be ye also ready." It doesn't say get ready. It says be ready. There is a difference, isn't there? Of course, we will have to get ready in order to be ready. But when we get ready we must stay ready. Then we will be ready.

Could a person live for years and be ready? Yes, he had better. And that doesn't mean living in tension. It is people who are not ready who are in tension. And we should not be interested in some tranquilizing drug that will make unready people unaware of their tension. They need to be in tension, because they are in a most dangerous position. But the way to get rid of tension is to get ready. When you are ready, it doesn't make any difference whether the storm comes tonight or tomorrow or next week or next year. You are ready.

That is why Jesus says to be ready always. And if you are always ready you can go to sleep at night having committed the keeping of your soul to Him as unto a faithful Creator.

"God desires His people to prepare for the soon-coming crisis. Prepared or unprepared they must all meet it"
Acts of the Apostles, pages 431-432.

Whether we are ready or not, the storm is coming. What does it mean to be ready?

"And those only who have brought their lives into conformity to the divine standard, will stand firm at that time of test and trial" *Ibid*.

This time there is not going to be an ark made of lumber and pitch. This time we are going to go through the storm of persecution and the storm of the elements. Earthquakes, hurricanes, tidal waves. We will see these things all around us. But thank God, Jesus says there shall not one hair of your head perish. It is going to be a

wonderful thing to have such a sense of the companionship of God and His providence that we can accept it, and not only be saved from physical damage, but be saved from a nervous breakdown.

To go through the time of trouble that is just ahead would drive a person insane if he was not ready, resting and trusting in Jesus. We are told that the most vivid imagination cannot picture the severity of the ordeal. But God is going to have some people concerning which He says:

"Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus"
Revelation 14:12.

And because they have that patience, I want you to notice what the result is:

"In your patience possess ye your souls" Luke 21:19.

We hear of people losing their minds. God's people are going to keep theirs. They are going to keep their souls, minds, and intelligence. They are going to be restful and trustful in God through that great storm. Why? They have settled two things. They have settled that God is on the throne, and that God works together for good to them that love Him. They have also settled that they are perfectly willing for God to do anything with them that He wants to. And when we settle that God is in charge and we are glad to have Him do what He wants to.

"My accompanying angel cried out with awful solemnity, 'Get ready! get ready! get ready! for the fierce anger of the Lord is soon to come. His wrath is to be poured out, unmixed with mercy, and ye are not ready. Rend the heart, and not the garment. A great work must be done for the remnant. Many of them are dwelling upon little trials.'" *Early Writings*, page 119.

What does it mean to dwell upon? It means to think about it and talk about it, and mull it over. And what is in the heart comes out.

Jesus was speaking to the multitude, and there were hundreds of people who wanted to speak to Him. One man finally got close enough where he could say something that was on his heart.

"And one of the company said unto him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me" Luke 12:13.

Think of it. Perhaps that was the first and last time he ever had a word with Jesus. He did not ask to get ready for heaven. He did not ask Jesus to show him how to get the victory over temper. No. Nothing spiritual at all. It was purely materialistic. Extremely selfish.

If you had a chance to talk to Jesus today, to unburden your heart, what would you ask Him for? Would You get me a new roommate? Would You move me

to a room where it has more in it? I wish You would keep the neighbor's chickens from coming over and tearing up my garden. I wish You would stop the railroad trains from tooting so loud. I wish you would move so and so away. He gets in my hair. He bothers me.

Many are dwelling on little trials. Do you have any?

Somebody says, That's the point. They are like mosquitos. They just bother you.

Some people live where there are mosquitos all the time. I have often thought that God allows a number of things to be around us like mosquitos or railroads or this or that just to remind us that we are not in heaven yet.

Some people, if they could, would get this world fixed up like heaven, and be perfectly willing to stay here always. And what happens to the millions in heathen lands can become a very minor point if we can just get everything nice and comfortable and convenient, and just like we like it.

But God allows a mosquito every once in a while, a whistle blast once in a while, and a hurricane once in a while to help you and me to realize that this world is not our world.

This man had the opportunity to talk to Jesus. What did he want? He wanted his brother fixed up so he would do what he wanted him to do. Master, speak to my brother so he will divide the inheritance with me.

If there is anything that makes trouble it is inheritance, isn't it? Down through the ages here is a man who is in a great stew because the inheritance isn't divided to suit him. He thinks that if Jesus will get busy and do something about it the brother will have to listen.

I think I know how Jesus felt. From time to time people come to me because they think I can get somebody to do something about this or that thing that is bothering them. And there are times I long that we shall lift our eyes above the little, petty trials, and that in our hearts shall be that great desire for Jesus to help us to be ready and keep us ready.

"Ye suffer your minds to be diverted too readily from the work of preparation and the all-important truths for these last days. And ye dwell upon little trials and go into minute particulars of little difficulties to explain them to the satisfaction of this one or that." *Ibid.*

I have had people tell me of some problem that is bothering them, and take twenty minutes to do it. They could have done it in two minutes, if it needed to be done. We are so anxious that people understand our side of it. We are so afraid somebody will think we are to blame. Of course, we are never to blame, are we?

"Conversation has been protracted for hours between the parties concerned, and not only has their time been wasted, but the servants of God are held to listen to them, when the hearts of both parties are unsubdued by grace. If pride and selfishness were laid aside, five minutes would remove most difficulties" *Ibid*.

Isn't that encouraging? But isn't it devastating to think of the hours of wasted time when five minutes would remove most difficulties.

"Angels have been grieved and God displeased by the hours which have been spent in justifying self... and thus precious time be wasted that should be spent in showing transgressors the error of their ways and pulling souls out of the fire" *Ibid*.

Souls are going down to eternal ruin while we spend a lot of time trying to be sure that everybody understands all the minute particulars of how we have been wronged, and why this one is off, and why this one is in our way. Souls are going down in those muddy waters.

God help us to settle in our hearts, individually, that as for me I will have done with all that nonsense. I will devote my time and energy in getting ready, and helping others to get ready. And if there is an inheritance to be divided, I will leave that with God. If He wants me to have some, He will take care of it. But I am not going to spend my time taking the Master's time away from soul winning to carry out some selfish plan of mine.

"I saw that the seven last plagues were coming upon the shelterless heads of the wicked; and then those who have stood in their way will hear the bitter reproaches of sinners, and their hearts will faint within them.

"Said the angel, 'Ye have been picking at straws -dwelling upon little trials—and sinners must be lost as a consequence.'" *Ibid*, pages 120,121.

Most of the trials we have are little trials. God is testing us to see how anxious we are for the one thing of being ready. How earnest we are of getting that one thing—a likeness to Jesus. God is testing us to see whether we will be diverted and distracted, or whether we will keep our eye on the goal and our feet moving in that direction.

I am thankful that Jesus has told us how we can get ready. He has told us exactly how we can have those white robes.

"And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great

tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" Revelation 7:13-14.

There are two things I want you to notice. One is tribulation, and the other is the blood of the Lamb. You will have to have both to get ready. All the tribulation in the world will never get you ready unless you have yielded your life to be washed by Jesus. On the other hand, the fact that Jesus died upon the cross will never accomplish the work in you unless you are willing to be yielded to the providence of God, including tribulation.

Shall we choose our Master's choice this morning? He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem when the time came for Him to be received up. He turned not back from arrest, imprisonment, scourging, spitting, abuse of all kinds, and then crucifixion and death. He accepted the baptism of blood that through Him perishing millions might have hope.

So today God is calling those who will accept tribulation and choose to be baptized into the sufferings of Christ. Choose to live for Him, that the character of God may be revealed in them.

Can a person who is a sinner be made white and clean? Yes. Can a man who has been a slave to evil habits be transformed? Yes. Is there something that has been holding you back? Something interfering with your being ready? Whether it is one thing or fifty, you can have your character and life washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb.

Come to Jesus simply and say, Dear Lord, I must have help. I want to be truly converted. I want that sin taken out of my life.

Jesus has help for you. I know He has. There is no question about it. There is help for you. That is why Jesus died. That is why He came down to this world so He might show us how to live, and then die for us that His blood might wash away our sins.

When we see what sin did to Him, when we see Him dying on the cross to take sin away, the sight of that love revealed in that sacrifice melts our hearts, and we want to be washed and cleansed.

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