

In the Eye of the Storm

BY DAVID POSEY

Some of you will remember the band *Earth, Wind and Fire*, one of the most successful rock bands of all time. But this article is not about a rock band. Earth, wind and fire is the state of affairs in the world right now:

- 8.1 magnitude quake rocks Mexico
- Three active hurricanes in the Atlantic Basin
- 70+ large fires burning in the West

As I write this, the Houston area in Texas is trying to recover from the devastating effects of torrential rainfall that caused massive flooding. Many of our brethren are still suffering loss from that storm and many of you have given of your means to help them out.

Meanwhile, another hurricane (Irma) is moving inexorably toward Florida and another (Jose) is right behind it. The resort area of Turks and Caicos has been devastated and the forecast for Florida is dire — right now, Irma is predicted to affect the whole state. We have brethren there, as you know.

Mexico is reeling from a huge earthquake that killed and injured many; there was also an earthquake in Japan. Out here, in the western US, wildfires are raging. Trey and Angie were in Oregon last week and the visibility was like a foggy day in the valley in winter, due to smoke from multiple forest fires.

It's easy for us to ignore all this; after all, our weather today (Friday) is great: up here in Rescue, the forecast is a high of 89 and sunny. That's almost Maui weather. I can sit here in ignorance. All I have to do is keep the TV turned off, never look at Facebook or Twitter and just enjoy myself, in my own little world. And that is tempting.

But I believe that God intends for me to adopt the motto, "there, but for the grace of God, go I..." Peter expects us to pay attention. Speaking of the influence of the devil in persecuting Christians he says, "...knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world." *1 Peter 5:9*

There are brethren who are suffering for various reasons. Though, we try, it is difficult to identify with Christians who are being persecuted for their faith. But we should be able to readily identify with our American brethren who are dealing with loss and radical change due to natural disasters.

We live in earthquake country. One massive earthquake could radically alter our lives, forever. Fires are always a threat and floods are not out of the question here. A huge, unusual storm could cause catastrophic damage (it almost happened last year with the failure of the Oroville dam).

I don't believe any of us should live in fear of these things; I'm not a very good alarmist. My point is, we should be able to "fall in with" (empathize) people who are dealing with these terrible events in their world. What's the point?

There are two I want to make.

1. We should help where we can — give until it hurts (that's one definition of sacrifice).
2. We should put ourselves smack dab in the middle of "the eye of the storm."

Do you ever consider how you would deal with a devastating loss? When you read some of the stories that are coming out of Houston, you will be impressed with the heartbreaking sadness of the phrase: "lost everything." *Let that sink in.*

I think all of us are wise enough to accept Paul's point that "we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world" (1 Timothy 6:7). But that's after we die, right? We fully expect to hang on to the stuff we have accumulated while we live. Food, clothing, water, gasoline; our homes, our automobiles, our furniture. We may be ill-prepared to live "in the eye of the storm."

"Lost everything."

Those words are from our family members — our brothers and sisters in Christ and the words are not at all uncommon if you've been following the Houston story. Unfortunately, we may see those words by Sunday.

How do we prepare ourselves for this? There are a lot of steps you can take to preserve your stuff. But mentally and spiritually there is really only one way. Let's look at that 1 Timothy passage again, in context:

But godliness with contentment is great gain, for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.

"Love of money" is not love of the paper it's printed on; it is the love of what you can acquire with money. It's falling in love with your house, your cars, your ability to eat in fine restaurants. There is nothing wrong with any of those things — unless you fall in love with them.

If you are content with food and clothing, then you are ready to withstand loss of the "extras"; and, you'll be ready to help others when you see those sad words: "lost everything." And if you should lose, you'll say, "it's only stuff."