



Chronicles of Diversity

21 September 2005; Volume 7, Number 34

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Stupendous Change: *Peace within the Chaos*

*Be anxious for nothing, but
in everything by prayer and
supplication, with thanksgiving, let
your requests be made known to God;
and the peace of God, which surpasses
all understanding, will guard your
hearts and minds through Christ
Jesus. Philippians 4:6,7*

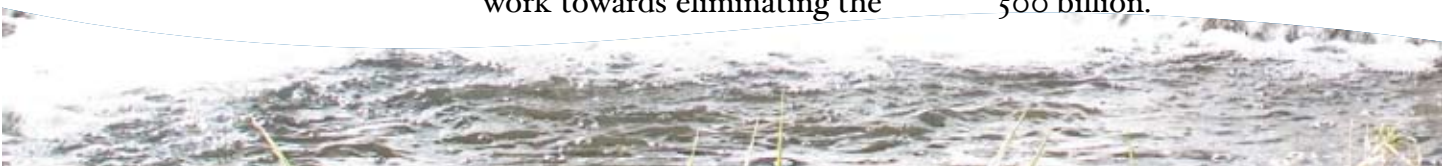
I suppose it is sort of silly, but most of the time in our culture this Biblical promise is utilized when it relates to our prayers about our stuff. On the front end of Hurricane Katrina, most of the preparations were concerned about people saving their stuff. During the storm, for those few brief hours and in the few days in the storm's tragic aftermath, those stuff prayers, may have found their proper perspective. But now stuff has again taken its center in our desires in this materialistic world.

"We will rebuild the Gulf Coast stuff better than ever and in the process we will work towards eliminating the

systematic stuff poverty of the region."

Personally, I would hope that all the rebuilt bars and casino's would be turned into something with more redeeming social value, but how else are we going to support the New Big Easy and the surrounding wetlands. Stuff, in itself, may be pretty much neutral, the use of stuff however, is not.

Now governments at all levels have acquiesced to the responsibility for not saving people's stuff, and have also accepted the blame for many individual choices to ride out the storm in the perceived easiest way possible. "It's not your fault you couldn't get away, you didn't have a car and the other needed stuff." Estimates for the recovery are now above 200 billion, my personal guess from the beginning is that when all is said and done it will run more towards 500 billion.



I guess some of my hardness in this situation comes from the thought that this may only be the beginning, not the end of the devastation on the Gulf Coast and elsewhere. In the next few days Hurricane Rita, may not follow the models we have predicted, and there is still about two months left in this year's hurricane season, and how about next year, or the year thereafter.

All current weather models say that we are just at the beginning of a cycle of high natural hurricane levels. This is a natural cycle of climate fluctuations. You can blame some of it on the internal combustion engine if you like, but it still comes down to the fact that for the next 25 40 years hurricanes are going to become much worse than what we can recall in our short memories.

Couple this with the fact that in those short memories, people have been flocking to move to these hurricane areas to live in air conditioned comfort, and you have disasters ready to happen. Could it be that cars are not the problem, but air conditioning? Especially when you use fossil fuels to make electricity to run the air conditioning. But that puts air conditioned cars squarely in the bulls eye of causing all the problems. Sadly, there may be more truth to that statement than we care to admit.

If I have read the literature properly, on top of that, for a minimal fee, if your stuff is wiped out by water, our United States Government will underwrite you up to 250,000.00 to rebuild your castle, and another 100,000.00 for your destroyed stuff. Not in Death Valley, but Hurricane Death Alley. Something needs to change and it is not the weather cycle.

Thank God, we gave up soap boxes long ago for us to stand and make inane speeches. I suppose we now must use plastic buckets, and PowerPoint presentations with projectors, I can't forget email, and then there is the cable news networks. Where does all that energy come from and what happens after it has been utilized?

I may be one of the few people to admit it, but I am sure as Hurricane Katrina approached the coast many others were reminded of the story about the evangelical Christian and the flood:

As a major flood surrounded the home of an American evangelical, he found himself stranded on his house rooftop. A boat happened by and the crew asked, "Sir can we rescue you?"

To which the man replied, "No, thanks, the Lord will rescue me!"

Puzzled by the response the rescue boat and crew moved on.

The next day as the flood waters continued to rise, this same boat rescue episode was repeated, by a different crew. This time the man responded, "Jesus, will save me!"

Again the crew and the boat continued on their way.

The flood waters continued rising and on the third day an emergency helicopter passed his way. Again the man declined the rescue gesture assuring the chopper crew, "I have faith, the Lord will take me through this and save me."

Eventually, the flood carried away the house and the man drown. Upon his entrance to heaven, the Lord asked the man, why three times he refused to be rescued from the flood. To this the man answered, "Lord, I believed with all my heart that you alone could rescue me, and you didn't, I don't understand."

To this Jesus responded, "I sent two boats and a helicopter. What did you expect?"

In the case of Hurricane Katrina He would add, "I also gave you five days notice to pack your bags and get out!"

Honestly, this stupendous ignorance of the power of nature, creation, Mother Earth, or whatever handle you put on these "Acts of God," is really a function of our self centered heart. It is probably more prevalent among pagans than the children of God, but it is a fatal unctio syndrome we all reluctantly carry. However, a lot of pagan scorn emanates from the perceived and often taught concept that Christians will escape any of the truly stupendous changes that will take place on earth, "Because The Rapture can happen at any minute."

In my circles, I do not have any serious problems with how The Rapture teaching is taught. For it is quite true that Jesus Christ took our judgment upon Himself at the cross, and therefore we will not be judged with the rest of the world during God's judgment on earth during the Great Tribulation.

I do have some problems with how this revelation, historically became part of the evangelical pale of orthodoxy, but I also have many more problems with the pale it replaced. However, The Rapture is an understandable graceful application of the true Gospel message and it is the best way out of a rapidly degrading earth that fallen man can conceive. One thing the Bible clearly teaches is that the Lord will not share His Glory with anything created. Too often The Rapture in evangelicalism has become the idol of the church's hope of glory, not the Lord Jesus Christ. That is just the way I see it.

Tangentially, I see the evangelical church passively accept the concept that its OK to amass individual and corporate wealth and stuff without any moral conscience to the rest of the world in any way. More importantly, in this series context, understanding that, "There but by the grace of God alone, go I." Should that understanding take place, there is wisdom that everyone should plan and equip themselves and others in what to do in stupendous events.

In times of stupendous change, whether you perceive them at the time to be blessings, or catastrophes, we are forced to live beyond our vision. You can not look to the government to help you. Your neighbors, as we have seen, may loot your supplies, or do even more dastardly things. In God's Providence His rescue will come through ordinary, or common means, in His timing. This is the natural order of things. But that does not mean that all is hopeless. Christians have the promise of "a peace that surpasses all understanding." In other words, a peace that is beyond the stupendous.

In the case of our flood story, what is represented is not that Godly peace, but the arrogance of self presumption. Self deception is the cause of much of the personal tragedy that happened during Katrina. This is taught to everyone in school and through all our cultural mores. You do not create reality, especially a good reality by your thoughts and your actions. We are all created to be unique, therefore we can not all be rich professional sports athletes, neither can we all be brain surgeons, but we all share a common humanity, created in the image

of God. That truth should provide us with a sense of true humility, not arrogance. Humility or individual elevation is a divergent choice we all make.

God saw His creation, including man, and confessed that it was very good. Because of sin, that created goodness has degraded over time. That also means that the climate of Eden is no longer our natural order. However, it may have something to do with our desire to live where it is always sunny and warm, especially if we can control that warmth and humidity by artificial means. But that type of security truly is not the peace we are discussing.

I have experienced God's stupendous peace a number of times in my life. In all of those there seems, just as the passage goes, a definite link with prayer. The unique thing about survival situations that we have reported in "Chronicles" a number of times is that survivors always pray. Those who died, the prayer request or answer belongs to God alone.

In some of my trying situations the event was completely unexpected, and so was the quality of the peace. But most of the time I was at least somewhat prepared for what was happening, and I had that same unexpected peace, that my preparations were noted, and were sufficient. Many times there was also an awareness of what I could do better next time, should it ever occur. That is part of the Goodness of God.

Prayerful preparedness is the design that should be the essence of all our plans if we hope to deal with stupendous change. Prayerful preparedness means that you can be calm and lead others in times as we have recently seen when all of culture breaks down, naturally, or by human calamity.

It also works in the wilderness where you are alone with God. In fact, if you look at the great leaders of the Bible, they learned their leadership skills in the wilderness, not in the classroom. Rejoining other people, in all those Biblical cases, they taught others directly what they had learned straight from God, essentially from no other textbook but the Bible of their day providing context.

The First Commandment, one of those ten that are causing all the fuss in America today says, "*You shall have no other gods before Me.*" Times of stupendous change cause that not to be just a legal

admonition, but an absolute promise. At least in those who survive. It will also be true in those who shall lead others through the unknowable desert. In this desert wilderness all our idols will be destroyed, except the Prince of Peace.

The word search to get the text for the First Commandment in Exodus 20:3 and Deuteronomy 5:7, also yielded Judges 10:13: *Yet you have forsaken Me and served other gods. Therefore I will deliver you no more.*

All the discussion of things and events to get us through this week hopefully has laid some context, that the peace that surpasses all understanding, only works when God is God in our life, and all the rest is currently inconsequential. In the stupendous time, that not only works, but changes your priorities in the rest of your life. Some of us need renewing lessons all too frequently, but with enough repeat performances of God's amazing grace, love, and sovereignty we may begin to destroy some of our idols.

Self righteous American evangelicalism, has many idols that we call inspired revelations. We touched briefly on The Rapture. Others sometimes, are our desire to fit all of time into Bishop Ussher's Chronology, or our desire to convert God's converts, rather than disciple them, the list is almost infinite.

The work of the church is to share the essence of God with all of humanity, so they are without excuse. Creation does a good job of doing that also, except it is weak on grace. For God's grace in creation is too stupendous for us to grasp, and furthermore the prime example of that grace was prepared before and is the foundation of creation itself, and is man centered. The gospel, how stupendous is that truth, was prepared before the foundation of the world for humanity that He created in His likeness.

Every Christmas we all recall the chorus from Handel's "Messiah." Most of us know that those famous words are a direct quote from Isaiah 9:6. The Prince of Peace is there in all of His creation. That is just as true in times of stupendous change, as it is in mundane boredom, or our self righteous piety. The Prince of Peace

is the example that transcends everything and allows His church to minister in times of stupendous change, not by telling people about Jesus, but showing people Jesus and His love, by listening to their stories and providing for their needs in natural common means, thereby bringing peace, God's peace tangibly through the chaos.

For unto us a Child is born,

Unto us a Son is given;

And the government will be upon His shoulder.

And His name will be called

Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God,

Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Isaiah 9:6

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