

Lessons From New Orleans

By Pastor Kelly Sensenig

We have recently witnessed the largest natural disaster that has ever hit the shores of the United States of America. Hurricane Katrina washed ashore and broke the levy system designed to protect New Orleans, which sits 15 feet below sea level. As a result, the entire city was basically destroyed by water and thousands lost their lives. The physical devastation, the human loss of life, and the physical aftermath of this tragic event will make this the costliest and catastrophic disaster to ever hit the United States of America. But what are some lessons that we can learn from this great tragedy? Let me mention two of them.

First, God wants us to show compassion toward hurting people. Galatians 6:10 says, "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all *men*, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." 1 Timothy 6:18 states, "That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate." 1 John 3:17-18 reminds us to also be generous as Christians in our outreach to others. "But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels *of compassion* from him, how

dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.”

The message of Christianity is one of reaching out to those who are hurting and in need. We do this with physical and spiritual help. Both are needed. Sometimes we can only get to a man’s soul through his belly! Don’t misunderstand me. I’m not referring to the social gospel for the liberal social gospel neglects to witness to people about Jesus Christ and their need for salvation through Christ (Acts 4:12). But as true believers we can help people physically and spiritually at the same time. We can feed them the earthly manna and the spiritual manna that is from Heaven at the same time. While Jesus was here on earth He set the example of demonstrating genuine compassion and love for people. As Christians we have a responsibility to assist the hurting. When we turn our eyes away from people we are not being Christlike or Christian.

The news media was interviewing a Christian man who was opening up his home, which he was intending to sell, to a family who had lost everything in the flood. He decided to not sell his home until the family was back on their feet. His testimony was good for he said “God had given him these things and blessed him so that he can in

return help people with them.” Living out our Christian life is all about helping people to cope with life. This is true from a physical and spiritual perspective and many times the physical opens up the door for the spiritual. When we reach out and help people from a physical standpoint we often have opportunity to make a spiritual impact and witness in their lives (Acts 1:8).

We need to help and pray for the people of New Orleans. We need to be compassionate and express our Christian outreach to them in any way we can. What have you done to assist these people? To ignore these hurting people is not something Jesus would do if He were here. Mark 6:34, “And Jesus, when he came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and he began to teach them many things.” This message was seen on a church sign. The sign sent some confusion to others. It read: “We Care About You. Sundays 10 a.m. Only.”

The second lesson we learn from New Orleans is that God is in control of the weather. Mother Nature is a humanistic filler term that is often used by the media to override the truth of God’s existence and working among the weather patterns of this world. Today man

attempts to bypass God and rename God by such designations or titles as Mother Nature, Father Time, or Old Man Winter. For some reason many want to dismiss God from having any part with the disaster of New Orleans. But one thing is for sure. God is in control of the weather. God was in control of steering the course of Hurricane Katrina and where it made landfall. If He was not in control of this hurricane then He is not God.

Nahum 1:2-4 says, "God *is* jealous, and the LORD revengeth; the LORD revengeth, and *is* furious; the LORD will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth *wrath* for his enemies. The LORD *is* slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit *the wicked: the LORD hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm,* and the clouds *are* the dust of his feet. He rebuketh the sea, and maketh it dry, and drieth up all the rivers ..." One thing is for sure. God sends tragedies upon this nation to get our attention. He wants us to know that we are a wayward people that need to turn away from our sins and seek to put Him first in this country. We no longer want God in our schools, our marriages, pledge of allegiance, or in any facet of our government. We have stripped this nation of God's moral code (Ten Commandments) and then seek to pray to God and ask for

His blessing and help. Is not this hypocrisy? Certainly God is not pleased with our nation's actions, which are pitted against Him and His absolute standard of truth.

Nahum 1:6 portrays God as a righteous judge. "Who can stand before his indignation? and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? his fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him." Nahum 1:8 then records these solemn words: "But with an **overrunning flood** he will make an utter end of the place thereof, and darkness shall pursue his enemies." What was true of Nineveh can be true today. America is not exempt from judgment. The pattern of the Bible clearly reveals that God reserves the right to judge nations and cities, as the righteous Judge (Revelation 15:3), and the Bible reveals that He has done this in the past and will do so in the future (Revelation 16:17-19). Surely we cannot think that we are exempt from His judgment today by saying, "Where is the God of judgment?" (Malachi 2:17).

Let us not be Biblically naive about this tragic event in New Orleans. While we reach out and help those who are in need, and experience the hurt of other people, we cannot forget who is in charge of the whirlwind. It's God. It's no secret that America needs to

be awakened to her sinful condition before God and repent of her sins. Here is God's invitation to America today. Isaiah 1:18, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." The problem is this. America does not want to reason with God.