



TROUBLED TIMES

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PART ONE SEPTEMBER 2005

Recently the terrible Hurricane Katrina hit the USA. We feel a great deal of pain and sorrow for everyone that was affected, and pray for God's hand on the relief efforts. The hurricane affected many other countries as well. Here in Latin America gas prices increased dramatically, which led to price increases in basic food and services and social unrest, as these increases affect millions of people. The world is getting smaller and smaller, so what affects one country increasingly affects the others.



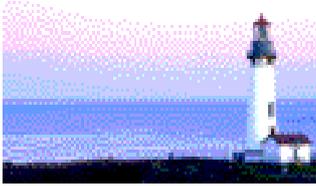
Watching the news after the hurricane, I was very interested by people's reactions. Many seemed so shocked that a superpower like the USA would have such difficulty in managing a disaster like this in its own territory. I believe that these reactions are based on our illusions about reality. Although the USA is the most powerful nation in terms of its military and economy, like every country, it's made up of weak human beings. No-one can avoid attacks of nature like this hurricane. And it's an illusion to believe that even the USA could overcome all of this easily.

But the world is based on illusions. When you see some powerful President on TV, his media image gives the impression that he is larger than life, so big and powerful and strong. But if you're in a room with this same man, you see that he's a human being just like the rest of us. He's a man with two hands and two eyes, who has to breathe, sleep and eat; he's just a man. Perhaps his position lends him power and authority but he's still no more than a man with many limitations. As human beings, no matter who we are or where we live, we are weak. And a nation like the USA is indeed powerful, but compared to God, the forces of nature and so on, it's weak just like any other country.

We have to let go of our illusions about life, the future, and what's happening in the world. We have to learn to trust and fix our eyes on God and not on circumstances.

How do we line ourselves up with reality? Reality is in God and His Word. It's in the Spirit of God who lives within us. When Elisha and his servant were surrounded by an enormous army, the servant was naturally afraid (2 Kings 6). And Elisha prayed, "Lord, open his eyes so he can see reality." God opened his eyes and he saw a large number of angels surrounding them, protecting them, providing for them. In that moment the servant saw reality. He saw things above and not just things of the earth. We have to learn to see things from God's perspective, as this servant did.

For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; ¹⁸While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal. (2 Corinthians 4:17-18 KJV) For example, when I saw the increase in gasoline prices, I began to think, "Lord, now I'll have to restrict how much I use the car." That's common sense. But at the same time God commands me to look at the things that are not seen. And in His word He tells me that He will provide for His children; He will make it possible for me to keep doing the things that He has called me to do. I believe it. I believe the Word of God. So, the things that can be seen are the prices, the circumstances, etc. It's necessary to face these things, to face reality. But at the same time we have to learn to look at the things that are not seen. The unseen things are called faith, and God.



We can't see God, right? I haven't seen Him. At least not with my natural eyes. I do see Him with the spiritual eyes that God has given me. So we have to fix our minds not only on the things on earth but also on the things above, on Him. "God, these are the prices, these are my needs. Father, please provide." And although at times God allows us to experience lack and trials, at the end of the day He always proves himself faithful. Verse 17 says, *our light affliction, which is but for a moment.* The trial is light and only for a moment. And it produces character, faith, patience, and compassion in us. When we walk with God in the middle of trials, they produce a glory in us!

So it's very important to learn to see things from God's perspective and stand firm in that perspective, however difficult circumstances become. Listen carefully: things are going to get worse. If someone tells you, "Ah, the world is getting better...", don't believe them. The Bible clearly shows that although brief times of prosperity may come, basically things are getting worse, and **extremely** difficult times are coming. I know that's not an easy message to hear, but we want to preach the truth, not the things that perhaps we would prefer to hear. Things will get worse. These hurricanes, wars, crime, and so on, are just the beginning, according to Biblical prophecy.

We're living in the last days. It's very important to be founded and established in the truth, in reality. ***For we walk by faith, not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7 KJV).*** Every believer should memorize this verse. At times we walk by sight and not by faith, but we ought to walk by faith and not by sight.

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. (Hebrews 11:1 NASB) The world says that if something isn't seen, it doesn't exist. But God says that we should walk in faith, and faith means the conviction of things **not seen**. For example, in regard to the increased prices, I don't see money falling from the sky to help us, but what I do see are the promises of God, that in our time of need He will provide for us.

Now we'll look at the last days. Most believers agree that we are living in the last days. Due to what is happening around us, due to the Biblical prophecies, and due to what the Holy Spirit is saying. Jesus Christ will return soon. I don't know if it will be today, or tomorrow, or in ten years, or once I'm dead and my children are adults. But I do know that He will return soon.

We're going to let go of our illusions about the world situation and our illusions about who we should be trusting in.

(2 Timothy 2:1-5 AMP) ***BUT UNDERSTAND this, that in the last days will come perilous times of great stress and trouble.*** This is something we must understand. In the last days, that is, nowadays, dangerous times are coming.

²*For people will be lovers of self and [utterly] self-centered... We see this all over. Lovers of money and aroused by an inordinate [greedy] desire for wealth, proud and arrogant and contemptuous boasters. They will be abusive (blasphemous, scoffing), disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy and profane. ³ without natural [human] affection (callous and inhuman)... There are many people alive now who it seems don't have natural human affection or normal emotions. They are extremely hard hearted. relentless (admitting of no truce or appeasement)... You can't reason with them. Slanderers (false accusers, troublemakers), intemperate... They don't have self-control. And loose in morals and conduct, uncontrolled and fierce, haters of good. ⁴ Treacherous [betrayers], rash, inflated with self-conceit. Lovers of sensual pleasures and vain amusements more than and rather than lovers of God.*

**FOR WE WALK
BY FAITH, NOT
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This is the society we live in, isn't it? **Most people are in love with pleasure rather than in love with God.** We even see this in the church.

⁵For [although] they hold a form of piety (true religion), they deny and reject and are strangers to the power of it. Some of these people seem to be godly, but they are not. *Avoid such people.* Be careful who you choose as your friends, who you spend time with. We should avoid people like those described above, because bad company corrupts good character. When we evangelize on the streets we spend time with all kinds of people, sharing the gospel with them so they can be saved, but that doesn't mean that we would choose some of them as our closest friends. God tells us to avoid people who pretend to be godly, but really are in love with pleasure rather than with God; without natural affection, lovers of themselves. You should stay away from those kinds of people.

So, these are the times we live in. We see more and more people like this in the world. When today's children become adults, the world will have problems such as never before, because most of this generation have been raised without loving fathers, without values, without love. The only 'value' that most of them have been trained in is selfishness, the idea that you can live how you want, do what you want, without thinking about others. Speak with a teacher from any country and they will tell you that this generation is just like that. **But in the middle of this confused generation, God wants to have a testimony, people who are truly in love with Him.** And hopefully we can be part of that testimony.

Jesus prophesied about the last days in Luke 21:7-19 & 25-28.

And they asked him, saying, Master, but when shall these things be? and what sign will there be when these things shall come to pass? ⁸*And he said, Take heed that ye be not deceived: for many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and the time draweth near: go ye not therefore after them.* There are a lot of false prophets who claim to be like Christ. For example the Mormon religion acclaims Joseph Smith as their prophet. This man claimed to have received a revelation from God that to all intents and purposes Mormons believe has more authority than the Bible. They respect and adore him as if he were Jesus, but he is a false Christ. In this country leaders of certain sects claim to have authority like Christ. They exercise an almost total authority over their followers and teach that they should only listen to them, not to anyone else. This is dangerous. But sadly thousands of people follow them. However, we will not be deceived, if we are rooted and grounded in the Word of God and fellowship with Christ.

⁹*But when ye shall hear of wars and commotions, be not terrified: for these things must first come to pass; but the end is not by and by.* In the last hundred years we've seen and continue to see many wars all over the world involving many countries and billions of people. Wars have changed their character. Modern weapons kill many more people than before. One country used to attack another to win land. Now, terrorists who believe in a certain ideology have become aggressors, and every single nation is exposed to their surprise attacks. These attacks can affect billions of people through economic repercussions. Note that Jesus prophesied this situation. Wars, commotions, revolutions, rebellions. **But Jesus says be not terrified.** As God's children we shouldn't be alarmed or afraid. Our Father is with us.

¹⁰*Then said he unto them, Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: ¹¹And great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences; and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven.* "Fearful sights" is translated in the NASB "terrors". There are terrors in various parts of the world. In July we saw terror in London. Last year we saw terror in Madrid. There is terror in Zimbabwe, in Uganda, in Iraq, in the Congo. There was terror in Asia with the tsunami. After Hurricane Katrina we saw terror in the world's superpower, the USA. We were shocked that such a thing would happen there. But it did, and it shocked us out of some of our illusions. More will happen, in ways that affect the whole world.

**JESUS SAYS,
BE NOT
TERRIFIED.**

In divers places, and famines, and pestilences... We've seen these things, especially in Africa. But famines are coming in the USA and Europe. **I don't know when, but the day is coming.** We must have our eyes on what is happening. But not in order to fear, rather in order to learn to trust in God more.

¹²But before all these, they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake. Many countries still enjoy freedom of religion. That freedom won't last for ever, but for now it exists. Nearly all the American and European nations enjoy freedom. But if you look at Africa and Asia, in many countries there is not freedom. Many of our brothers and sisters in Christ suffer there a whole lot. So these prophecies have been fulfilled and will continue to be fulfilled, but in an increasingly worldwide way. We have to be aware of these things and not live under illusions.

¹³And it shall turn to you for a testimony. Even persecutions are an opportunity for us to be a testimony.

¹⁴Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall answer: ¹⁵For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist. This is yet another example of how God wants to encourage us. Like Jesus said before, don't be terrified. Fix your eyes on the things above. Fix your mind on God's perspective. Have faith and not fear. We have a Father who loves us.

¹⁶And ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends; and some of you shall they cause to be put to death. ¹⁷And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake. ¹⁸But there shall not an hair of your head perish. How can Jesus say this? He just said that they will kill some of us, and then he says that not a hair of our head will perish! What does He mean? Elsewhere Jesus says, *Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul* (Matthew 10:28) Some of us will be killed, but we're all going to lose our body one day anyway, even if we simply die from old age. But Satan cannot touch our souls or our spirits, which are eternal. We can get to heaven whole and complete and ready to receive a new body that's much, much better than this one! So they may be able to take away our material possessions and kill our bodies, but they can't take away that which is eternal, that which is of real lasting value. Focus on the eternal and don't fear men.

¹⁹In your patience possess ye your souls. We must be patient. Keep following Jesus day by day, honoring Him, discerning His will, and above all, walking in faith and trust in Him. God is a good Father.

²⁵And 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... Interesting. A few months ago thousands of people died in the Asian tsunami, due to the sea and the waves roaring. Recently, the hurricane caused the sea and waves to roar in the USA. What were the results? Distress of nations and perplexity. It is prophesied here. The prophecies are being fulfilled.

²⁶Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth... We are living in these times right now. *for the powers of heaven shall be shaken.* Jesus prophesied disorder in the natural world.



²⁷And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. ²⁸And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh. **God wants his children to live with their heads held high.** There's no reason to let our heads hang down, discouraged and plagued by fears. We are saved, we are children of God, and despite all the disturbing things happening in the world (and more are coming), we have every reason to lift our heads, trusting in our heavenly Father that He is in control of everything; He is Lord of All.

Continued in Part Two

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"IF ANYONE THIRST, LET THEM COME TO ME AND DRINK"- JESUS
(JOHN 7:37)