

Hurricane Ike and God's Commands

Hurricane Ike barreled down on Texas a few days ago, leaving millions of our neighbors without power or safe water, causing huge amounts of wind and water damage, and forcing countless numbers from their homes, some permanently.

Government officials ordered Galveston residents, along with other coastal cities and towns, to evacuate. The National Weather Service tried to express the seriousness of their warning, promising "certain death" to those who stayed. People who lived in one- or two-story homes were told to pin their names and social security numbers to their chests to make identifying their corpses easier. Thousands decided to ride it out, wondering just how bad it could really be.

They found out.

Hurricane Ike left many parts of Galveston a broken, crumpled mess. The aftermath is much worse than residents imagined: no water, no power, no food, no phones. The smell is awful as sewage backs up into waterlogged streets. With no running water, people can't shower, much less flush toilets or even wash their hands after using one. A fetid smell rises from the sludge that's everywhere, a disgusting concoction of mud, sewage, asbestos, lead and gasoline. Not only are officials concerned about the health problems from the stuff, but gigantic bugs are emerging from it. Adding insult to injury is the growing number of mosquitoes.

One woman said, "Next time they should warn people about this, not the storm itself."

There are many reasons officials did everything they could to persuade people to evacuate. And this was one of them: the aftermath of a devastating storm is at least as bad as the battering winds and rain of the storm itself. The desire to spare residents from having to live in the post-hurricane nightmare was part of why officials urged residents to obey the evacuation order.

Surely this must grieve God's heart with pangs of familiarity. He sees every day—every moment!—the awful aftermath of our disobedience. Behind the gift of His commands is His desire to spare us from the pain and heartbreak that comes from disobedient independence. Behind the gift of His commands is a brilliant mind that knows every possible scenario about what would happen if we obeyed and if we disobeyed. He doesn't tell us on the front end what our disobedience will cost us; He doesn't owe it to us.

Government officials can't see the future. They could only assume the worst, given the computer models and even a rudimentary knowledge of the power of hurricanes. But God can.

May the awful post-hurricane stories remind us that God's rules and intentions are given to bless us, not because He's some sort of cosmic killjoy.

There are two truths He seems intent on wanting us to learn by heart: He is good, and He loves us. And that's why we can trust Him when He tells us what to do and what to avoid.