

Katrina

Colleagues,

The only ThTh reader I know of living in the cauldron of Katrina's cataclysm is Elise Turner in Jackson, Mississippi. I asked her for some words she might want to pass on to the rest of us. Here's what she sent.

Peace & Joy!

Ed Schroeder

Dear Ed, This is more like free association than coherent writing.

*Fondly,
Elise*

Byline: Disaster Central

isolation

fear

numbness

anxiety

exhaustion

weariness

sadness

inertia

As I think on the experiences of Katrina, I had several obvious choices of theme. But the news media and local preachers have worn these out. What do I have to say that has spiritual meaning for me, thoughts that have not been thought to conclusion; nor talked to death? The details of fallen trees, stifling heat, and reversion to a hunter/gatherer existence are in every newspaper. Skip them.

Clearing my mind, I jotted down the words that described my feelings during the howling storm, but especially in the unfolding aftermath. What is the pattern? Why do these words collected together seem familiar? Then I recognized them—the disciples in the aftermath of the crucifixion. After witnessing the torture and death of the One they loved best. Even though they were given “storm warnings.” It was worse than they expected. Not a hard time, but an overwhelming flood of horror. Scattered, afraid, leaderless. Finally they crept back together, and waited—for what— they weren’t sure. How do you rebuild a shattered life, a shattered love? Perhaps they bickered and became angry with one another. Why didn’t you...? You should have...! The money’s gone; now what? We have His promises— what are they worth? Tending to the dead as balm for the living.

But their situation is not ours. No limbo of uncertainty or abandonment. No waiting to see if God will keep promises. When delivered in spirit, we can sweat out the rest. No need to ask silly questions like “why do bad things happen to good people?” More sound theologically to ask “why do good things ever happen to any of us?” Secure in the knowledge that all circumstances are controlled by Him for his purposes; and financial ruin, loss of health, death of loved ones, and heaviness of heart cannot separate us from Him. Sometimes, that’s the best you can

do—nail down that bit of faith and trust Him to tighten his grip. Shrieking winds and crashing floods can't pull you away. Even when you let go in despair, to slide away into blessed nothingness.

After everything is over, the sun comes out. You blink with surprise and wander out to see a different world. The wreckage, other stunned survivors. Overwhelming tasks. But you bear the Mark of the Lamb. What is it? The print of His hand where he gripped you so tightly. Not of our effort, but His. Undeserved, unearned, unfailing, unending. That's the Good News!