

# **A False Sense of Security**

By Walton Weaver

The chilling events of September 11, 2001 are a reminder to all of us who have felt secure as American citizens that no nation of people is ever immune from attack and the possibility of destruction. With the possible destruction of our entire civilization staring us in the face, the majority of people are totally unprepared for such an event.

People generally are not prepared when tragedy strikes, even when such events are brought about by their own failures or their own misdeeds. Oftentimes people are unable to see (sometimes willing, sometimes not) their own shortcomings, and as a result they feel secure in spite of the impending danger. Sometime before the Second World War Prime Minister Chamberlin returned from a conference with Adolf Hitler, saying, "Peace in our time." Not long after this visit Hitler started his campaign to conquer the world by force. Reminds us of President Regan's statement when dealing with the leaders of the former Soviet Union: "Trust, but verify."

In Jeremiah's day the nation of Israel was made to feel secure by the prophets and priests who cried out, "Saying, 'Peace, peace!' When there is no peace" (Jer. 6:14). Sadly, with these words ("peace, peace"), Jeremiah says, "They have healed the hurt of my people slightly." How was that? They were giving false assurances that all was well. For the prophets and priests to say "peace, peace" made the people feel good, but it was only a superficial healing. F. B. Huey, Jr. likens this to "physicians putting bandages over cancer and pronouncing it healed." He goes on to say that "their promise of peace was a hollow mockery. There is no peace for the wicked (Isa. 48:22; 57:21), nor can empty assuring words avert punishment (1 Thess. 5:3)."

There is a much needed spiritual lesson to be found here. It has always been true that people often feel secure in times of great danger, and tragically this is often true even when sufficient warning has been given. Let's first consider a few examples, then we will make a few brief observations on why people say peace and safety when destruction is near.

## **Examples Illustrating the Point**

1. *People Before the Flood.* Jesus describes how those before the flood in Noah's day failed to give heed to the warning of this great preacher of

righteousness. In spite of Noah's preaching the people felt safe and secure enough to go on about their daily business without giving any serious thought to the possibility of a coming great flood that would destroy them (Matt. 21:38-39). In fact, the Bible says that the wickedness of man became so great that God repented that he had ever made man (Gen. 6:5-7).

2. *Lot and His Family.* Lot and his family stayed in Sodom until the angels made special appearances to Lot, and then took them by the hand and led them out of the city to a place of safety. Even upon the urging of the angels for him to hurry and leave (Gen. 19:15), the Bible says that "he lingered" (Gen. 19:16). But the Lord "was merciful to him," and "the men took hold of his hand, his wife's hand, and the hands of his two daughters . . . and brought him out and set him outside the city." They did not see the danger. This is a great reminder of just how dangerous it is to delay, and yet multitudes of people in our own time are doing that very thing. Evidently they feel safe and secure, and they do not sense the urgency of doing something NOW.

3. *The Rich Man of Luke 16.* This is the case of one who evidently felt safe and secure until it was too late. He does not seem to have given much thought to his soul's condition when he had the opportunity. His riches no doubt had something to do with his failure. While he was yet alive on earth he gave no thought to the needs of others but lived in luxury himself. Do you suppose he felt self-sufficient in his possessions and therefore had no sense need for God? This sometimes happens even to Christians.

This was true of the Laodiceans: "Because you say, 'I am rich and have become wealthy and have need of nothing—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked'" (Rev. 3:17). How sad for one to be so rich and yet so poor! The rich man of Luke 12:16-21 had the same problem. He was rich, but as Jesus told him, he was not "rich toward God." It is a tragedy for one to feel safe and secure in his own possessions and die unprepared to meet God in judgment.

4. *The Foolish Virgins.* The five virgins who failed to take a sufficient supply of oil felt secure in the supply they had taken with them (Matt. 25:1-13). It was the delay in the bridegroom's coming that gave them their problem. Under ordinary circumstances the bridegroom would have made his arrival much earlier. This is a clear warning to Christians to always be ready, which is to be faithful and always busy in the Lord's work.

Whom do the foolish virgins represent? "The foolish virgins are not the unconverted, for they make no preparation; they are not apostates, for they, after waiting at their post for a time, abandon it and go their way; but they evidently represent those who enter the Church and stand at their post until the bridegroom

comes, and are then found without sufficient preparation to meet him. They make the preparation which they are led by their own indulgence or indifference to regard as sufficient, and content themselves with that, knowing that they run some risk of being lost. All who follow any questionable indulgence; all who neglect any of the ordinances of God; and all who are indifferent about soundness as it is in Christ, belong to this class” (McGarvey, *Matthew and Mark*, p. 216). They may have felt secure, but they were unprepared to meet God.

### **Causes of a False Sense of Security?**

1. *Oftentimes people do not realize they are not prepared to die.* Many have never considered that preparation is necessary if one is to be saved from the wrath of God. The plea of Amos to his people of old, “prepare to meet thy God” (Amos 4:12), is just as much needed today as it was in his time. Yet some feel *good enough* to be saved without any special preparation. Is being good to one’s companion, being a good father or mother, practicing brotherly love, and living an exemplary life enough to save one’s soul? If it is, why did Jesus need to come and die for our sins?

The good life of Cornelius was not enough. He yet needed “words” whereby he and all his house might be saved (Acts 11:15). There are positive divine laws that must be obeyed in order for one’s sins to be forgiven (Mark 16:16; Luke 13:3, 5; Acts 2:38). Had Cornelius continued without a knowledge of Jesus Christ, being the good man that he was, he doubtlessly would have felt secure in the good life he was living. But such feelings of safety would have been misguided. He would still be in need of words (the gospel) whereby he might be saved. No feeling of being right with God would have made it so.

2. *Some do not realize they are sinners.* Too many times the reason the good moral person does not feel he is unprepared to meet God in judgment is because he fails to face up to the fact that he is a sinner. This was the problem with the Pharisee of Luke 18 that we noted earlier. He thought within himself that he was justified before God. But no one can ever be justified “in himself.” Saul was a good man, and “concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless” (Phil. 3:6). He thought he was serving God by persecuting Christians, but he was the chief of sinners.

Thank God, he finally did come to see himself in this way. He knew he was nothing but a sinner. Once he had come to know the truth about Christ, he became aware that all the “confidence in the flesh” that he had depended upon under the law was of no avail. As a result of this new understanding, he then counted all the accomplishments “in the flesh” as loss in order that he might gain Christ and attain

the salvation he so desperately sought. He felt safe while he was in the Jew's religion, but what he felt merely gave him a false sense of security.

3. *There are also those who do not understand that being a member of the Lord's church is necessary.* Some would have us believe that the church a non-essential. Yet Christ loved and gave himself up (died) for the church (Eph. 5:25). He purchased the church with his own blood (Acts 20:28). He is the savior of the body (Eph. 5:23), and his body is the church (Eph. 1:22-23). Did he do all this for something that is not necessary? Hardly.

The church is necessary because one cannot be saved and not be a member of the church. The Lord takes care of church membership by adding each person to it as he/she is saved (Acts 2:47). The church is the saved, so how can the church a non-essential, or unnecessary? Since one must obey the gospel to be saved, and thereby become a part of the Lord's church, no one has the right to feel safe and secure before he in the church. Why is that? Because that is to feel safe before one is saved, before one has obeyed the gospel. Yet, this misunderstanding concerning the church leaves some feeling safe and secure before they are saved. This is a false sense of security.

4. *Others are convinced that God will not condemn them to an everlasting hell.* They feel confident in this conclusion, and therefore make no effort to obey the gospel and live for Jesus Christ. They believe God is too good to inflict such a punishment upon men and women. God is good, and he provides every good and perfect gift to men (Jas. 1:17), including their salvation (Jas. 1:18). His goodness should lead men to repentance (Rom. 2:4). But God is also severe. Paul tells us to "consider the goodness and severity of God" (Rom. 11:22), and one makes a terrible mistake when he considers only God's goodness. One must not close his eyes to the fact that when Jesus comes "with his mighty angels, in flaming fire," he will take vengeance "on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thess. 1:7-8), and "these shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power" (2 Thess. 1:9). Let no one deceive you into believing that only peace and safety awaits you at the Lord's coming if you have not obeyed the gospel of Christ, or if you are not being faithful to him as a Christian (1 Cor. 15:58; Rev. 2:10).

## **Conclusion**

We must not think only in terms of the second coming of Christ when thinking of our readiness to meet God in judgment. We conclude our remarks here with another quote from McGarvey; a comment he makes on this very point. In

his closing remarks on the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew, he says: “At this point it may be well to remind the reader that all the warnings in reference to his second coming, in the preceding as well as in the following divisions of this discourse, are equally applicable to our departure to meet him. Whether he first comes to us, or we first go to him, the result will be the same, for as we are at death we will be at his coming, seeing that it is concerning the deeds done in the body that we will be judged. (2 Cor. v. 10)” (p. 215).