

Greetings from Tyler,

What a blessing and a relief that hurricane Gustav did not pack anywhere near the wallop that was expected. We have some dear friends in and around New Orleans, and several were out of town. But we were particularly concerned about a couple of folks who were not able to evacuate. I spoke with Al Werner just hours before the hurricane was due to make landfall, and he was confident that he was on high enough ground, and had a generator and fuel standing by. We were finally in touch again yesterday. He's in great spirits, everything is fine and they survived the storm without much fuss!

You don't suppose all the prayers that went up had anything to do with the substantial lessening of that storm's strength in the hours before it hit land? It's no time to let down. Another powerful and unpredictable hurricane (Ike) is bearing down toward southern Florida. Man has no power over these storms, except through prayer.

Although it's been overshadowed by our domestic political contest, there is news of great progress in Iraq. We're told that our U.S. servicemen may soon be able to pull completely out of Baghdad, and they've already been able to turn over the once violent al Qaeda stronghold of Anbar province to the Iraqi military. These are no small feats, and we can certainly thank God and respect the service and sacrifice of our young men and women in the U.S. military. There are a few things going right, after all!

If you're interested in what the immediate future holds for the U.S.A., you've probably taken the time to look in on the national political conventions that have been held over the past two weeks. There have surely been some mighty inspirational speeches, stories and images. Numerous examples of tremendous personal sacrifice and heroism certainly transcend politics and go to faith in God and love of country. Will God afford this nation competent leadership in the near term? We're definitely going to need it. And the rest of the world is going to need us to have it!

Even the greatest of leaders would be facing some of the most daunting challenges in man's history. The years ahead are destined to be the most momentous of our lives, maybe in all of history. May God Himself guide and direct you, and all His people and bless and keep the U.S.A. One day, when God sees fit, the scales will fall from the eyes of those in this world that mean well, but cannot yet see or understand realities that seem so simple. Beyond the troubles this world is facing, we all have that to look forward to, and that is the future time we'll be celebrating in just a matter of weeks at the Feast of Tabernacles!

The GTA telecast this week offered Christ in the Old Testament and Terms of the Covenant. It prompted 288 requests with ninety-nine first time requests.

Hope you all have a great Sabbath.

Mark Armstrong