

...FOR THOSE SEEKING THE EMPOWERING PRESENCE OF THE Holy Spirit

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The Perfect Storm

by John Paul Jackson



The Beginning Winds of the Storm

You don't have to look very far before you see the beginning swells of the coming Perfect Storm. It seems this theme has caught the attention of many pundits and prophets.

Almost every day, there are multiple signs of the Perfect Storm's approach, and notice I said "approach"—meaning, it isn't here yet. What we are currently seeing is merely the early winds of the storm. Still, the scent of rain is in the air. Nearly everywhere we turn, we become more aware that without God's intervention, the world will not be the same 10 years from now. And we are correct to think that.

I believe we may well be living in a time much like Jeremiah the prophet described as, "Jacob's Trouble."

"Alas! For that day is great, so none is like it; and it is the time of Jacob's trouble, but he shall be saved out of it. 'For it shall come to pass in that day,' says the Lord of hosts, 'that I will break his yoke from your neck, and will burst your bonds; foreigners shall no more enslave them. But they shall serve the Lord their God.'" (Jeremiah 30:7-9)

However, David in Psalm 24 has a prophetic word for those who experience such a time of trouble.

*"The earth is the LORD'S and its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein. For He has founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the waters. Who may ascend into the hill of the Lord? Or who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not lifted up his soul to vanity (idolatry), nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation. **This Jacob, the generation of those who seek Him, who seek Your face.***

"Lift up your heads, O you gates! And be lifted up, you everlasting doors! And the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. Lift up your heads O you gates! Lift up, you everlasting doors! And the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts, He is the King of glory. Selah."

What do we, who live in the Jacob Generation, do?

First, this will be a generation of those coming to seek the face of the Lord—not just knowing about Him, but becoming so close that you can see His face.

Second, if you meet the qualifications something wonderful will happen. What are those three qualifications? Very simple, but not easy in this culture!

- You must have clean hands—have not harmed others.
- You must have a pure heart—have no hidden motives or agendas other than God's.
- You must not be driven by ego or be self promoting.

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What will happen to Christians in the Jacob Generation?

1. There will be a much clearer definition of the term Christian—it will not include the current acceptance of “lukewarm” as it is included now.
2. You will ascend the Hill of the Lord or be elevated or promoted above those around you.
3. You will live by the thick, Holy presence of God. That means you will hear and be guided by Him.
4. The Gates of Heaven will be open to you. Those spiritual questions that have been difficult to understand or know will become easy to understand.
5. The everlasting or ancient doors will open—meaning—Ancient, spiritual truths that have been hidden for a long time will be revealed.
6. The might, strength and power of the Lord and His hosts will come into your circumstances and situations to fight on your behalf.
7. Finally, the Glory of the Lord will rest in your house—Selah (or think about that)!

Here are Six Ways to Weather the Storm

Here are six things to keep in mind as you weather this storm with the grace and, prayerfully, the glory of God resting on you.

- 1. Don't overreact to media hype and spin.** They learned a long time ago that sensationalism sells and they will play it for all it's worth. In the midst of the media flurry, this will be a time when God reveals His secrets to His servants—so look for one. God is not caught by surprise. When there is panic, we tend to make decisions we later regret. Don't assume the worst, and don't be afraid. Should you plan? Yes. Is this serious? Yes. But it's not time to panic.
- 2. Simplify and streamline your life.** What things do you do that are pure convenience? Could you cut back on any luxuries? Keep your current car? Take in a roommate? How about reducing your latte count at the coffee shop? Selectively start looking to cut back in areas that don't really reflect your life's mission or calling, or aren't making a positive difference in other's lives.
- 3. Reconnect with friends and family.** God is your source—not your bank account, not your 401(k), not your gold, not your stock portfolio. Your friendships and other relationships are what feed your emotional health, and they stabilize you; you need them. Research shows that friendships play a dramatic role in getting people through difficult times. So reconnect today.
- 4. Rethink your focus.** You have a choice: You can live your life by principles or by pressures. Those who “fail” in life usually keep their eyes fixed on their current problems and lose sight of their life principles. As things change, it is vital to remind yourself of the principles you live your life by. Never lose sight of them during challenging times. They will help keep you focused. The difficulties we're facing now may be God's wake-up call to remind you of your original vision and purpose and why He made you the way He made you.
- 5. Be an Influence.** Are you an influence in your culture? For many, this will be a time of innovation and invention. For others, it will be a time of study and preparation for the promotion that will come when this season eventually passes—which it will. Don't chase trends, but study them to see where the culture is going. You should always be looking for original and innovative ways to engage the needs of others. Needs are going to abound, so ask God for a solution to those needs, and you'll succeed when your secular peers are failing.
- 6. Take More Time to Listen.** In the coming months and perhaps years there will be an entirely new set of needs that the people and this nation will have. The Lord wants to give innovative ideas and inventions to those who are close to Him. Set aside time to listen to Him. Prayer is great, but if all we do is make our needs known to God, it will be very difficult to listen. There is a lot we do not know about this coming time



frame; God just might have something He would like to say to you. You and I are living in a turbulent time. The Perfect Storm continues to swirl and won't dissipate for a number of years.

What Are Tough Times All About?

Obviously, tough times are just that—and they can go far beyond that description as well. They are often disappointing, frustrating and filled with tension and anxiety. However, if you focus on what you have lost or might lose, how difficult your life has become or what *might* happen, you will miss the most important aspects of why God allows times like these to begin with.

What is one of the most noticeable things that sets you apart from your neighbors and coworkers who don't have a personal relationship with Jesus? Isn't it how you handle these tough times?

What do you do with your circumstances?

First, tough times are not about what happens to you—they're about what you do with what happens to you.

God, in knowing all things, is not ignorant about this era of your life. In fact, He has spent your whole life preparing you for this moment and others that you are yet to face. Will you keep believing that He'll use everything you go through for His Kingdom purposes? Or will you sour along with so many others who base their relationship with God on their prosperity? Tough times prove our faith.

Influencing others

Second, tough times are about influence. How you handle these times will have great influence on two sets of individuals: those who watch how you handle your own adversity and those who will be changed by the counsel you give them.

God allows tough times to happen so that massive change is the result. The hope is that in God's plan all things will be better in the aftermath. We will once again place Him at the front of our minds. He will use *you* to deposit



this hope in others. God looked through all of the future and chose to place you here for such a time as this. He birthed you, created you, shaped you for such a time as this. You won't only make it, but you will be an example for others, and as such you will have more influence than ever.

The stuff of champions

Third, it is the people who focus on others and guard their words—i.e., people who order their conversation to reflect the provision and kindness of God, even in the midst of the storm—who will see His salvation.

There isn't a single generation that hasn't gone through tough times. Yes, some are tougher than others, but as the Lord once said to me, "Little battles produce little victories and result in little champions. Great battles produce great victories and result in great champions. Which do you want to be?"

The justice of God and a faithful heart

Fourth, the first thought most Christians have when tough times hit is to diminish or even stop their giving. Wow—wrong move! It was the widow of Zarephath's faithful, sacrificial giving in the middle of a severe drought that threw open the door for her to weather the drought.

Paul urged the church in Corinth to take as an example the Macedonian church, the poorest church, which gave to the Lord's work even in the midst of deep poverty and affliction (2 Corinthians 8:1-4). When Paul returned to the Macedonian church a few years later, he found them prospering.

In tough times especially, you really want God to act on your behalf! This is why Paul told the church in Philippi that, more than the financial gift he needed, he desired that heaven's fruit would abound in their lives. That fruit is what God gives to feed and bless and meet the needs of all who give to Him.

Closing

Those who genuinely are walking with God, through Jesus the Messiah, will see marvelous sights and encounter mysteries of Heaven as God miraculously provides. That provision will not just be food, but ideas, innovation, inventions, and favor. They will meet needs that no one else can meet. Daniel said it like this, *"The people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out great exploits"* (Daniel 11:32 KJV).

The hope for the future will come from those who know and are strong in God; those who walk with Him. These people will have deep compassion that results in great strength and internal fortitude—character. Their value to the suffering will not be found in their possessions, but in their strength and faith built by God over the years.



Excerpt taken from the eBooklet, "The Perfect Storm."

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John Paul Jackson is the founder of Streams Ministries Int'l. The ministry takes a multi-disciplinary approach to help others fulfill the purpose for which they were created. John Paul will be with us at the August 5-8, 2009, Holy Spirit Conference, **"The Prevailing Church."**

Right Here Right Now

by David Housholder

Our heritage, our greatest value added, as followers of Jesus with Charismatic/Pentecostal flavoring, is our sense of God's presence.

Unpack that word for a moment: Presence... Present...

What we offer the world is an experience of the Lord's presence in our lives. This experience is transformative at so many levels. It is the ultimate "game changer."

Not Looking Behind

Unfortunately, one of the downsides of the fact that Christians have been around for 2,000 years is that we have such a huge "story." Christian history is massive. We have outlived all of the nations and empires that gave birth to us. Whole languages have come and gone. Books about and by us number into the many hundreds of thousands.

We have done courageous things and shameful things (and everything in between), individually and as a group. We have developed all kinds of patterns for living out our faith and for worship. We have written thousands of songs; some of which we have sung for centuries. It is great to have such a heritage, unparalleled in human history.

But that heritage can get in the way. It can take on a life of its own. To the point that one, living in the abundance of our heritage wealth (our story), we no longer even need a living God in the middle of it.

Most of what we study in our seminaries is what the church has done in the past. What was written in the past? Who fought whom in the past? What they wore and what they sang.

We carry labels that tell people which "past Christian story" we associate with. We have theological "-isms" and denominational name tags. We fight with people who don't share our story and our past. Evangelicalism. Lutheranism. Pentecostalism. Calvinism. Revivalism. Etc.ism. Our story gets so heavy that we no longer need a present.

This is where we come in. This is where we do our best work as "charismatic" Christians. We invite people into the presence of God. Not into His past.

We do it in worship (the whole point of which is to help people encounter God, not to reinforce historical patterns). We do it in prayer ministry. The truth is, the past does not exist.

You can't go there. You can't take a picture of it. All we have are yellowing photos and aging dusty paper to remember it by.

The Reformation no longer exists. Paul's church in Ephesus no longer exists. The apostles are no longer walking around. Luther is not drinking beer in Wittenberg. The charismatic renewal of the 70's in the Minneapolis auditorium doesn't exist and the building is gone.



We, renewal oriented followers of Jesus, call people into the present. That is our unique anointing.

Mary Magdalene, in John's account of the resurrection, was all caught up in her story about what had just happened. She was running through the script in her head. She was assigning roles to people around her (i.e. "gardener"), and she was in great pain and grief.

The pain was caused by living in the past story. A past which didn't exist. It also made it impossible for her to see or hear the Risen Christ.

So much of our conventional church life is in the telling of stories and the interpretation of stories; talking about God as if he's not in the room.

Jesus has to cut through Mary's stories and interpretations and call her by name: Mary.

We who are committed to renewal are committed to creating an environment where people can hear Jesus call them by name. We have to break the "spell" of the past on people.

Not Fearing the Future

Martha of Bethany, sister of another Mary, was focused, not on the past, but on the future. This future is the world of concerns and worries.

- The world of tasks to complete.
- The world of "what just might go wrong."
- The world of fear.

Just like the past, the future is a trap.

We, renewal-oriented believers, are good at shaking people out of the past. But we are less good at avoiding fear and worry (the future).

Many Christians, especially those of conservative political persuasion, are continually worried about the future. We treat it with an air of inevitable doom and foreboding.

For a generation, the Communists were going to get us. Now it's the liberals and the Muslims. We talk about how things are "these days" as if God is not in control.

Isaiah 9:6-7, very clearly, in black and white, says that the increase of Christ's government shall have no end. We are on the right side of history.

Some things are worse than they were a generation ago; but most things are better.

1. There is less global hunger.
2. Overpopulation predictions were way out of line; most of us will live to see zero population growth on earth.

3. Infant mortality worldwide is a fraction of what it was.
4. Illiteracy is way down.
5. Violent crime in America peaked in the 70's.
6. There are dozens of democracies where there used to be dictatorships.
7. There are way more countries open to Christian missionaries than in the 60's.
8. Abortion, although still legal, is dropping in numbers in the US.
9. Racial hatred is way down.
10. We are no longer living under the clear and present danger of the Soviet Union pressing the button and vaporizing us.

We Christians send out "worry" e-mails about Obama and Oprah as if they are about to take God's place and put Him out of work.

Worry is a sin. Read Philippians 4:6-7. What causes worry is very simple.

Fear is living in a non-existent, worst-case future, which may not even happen.

We Christians have a euphemism for worry: "Concern." The more "concerned" we look, the more "pious" we come across.

God is in charge, establishing his Kingdom, and increasing his government. Sure we have setbacks, but we are on the right side of history.

We, in the community committed to renewal, need to call people OUT of the past and OUT of the future. These places aren't real.

The present is real. And that's where people get filled with the Spirit and touched by God's grace.

Let's gather in St. Paul this summer and celebrate. Celebrate the PRESENCE of the living Christ. And the past and the future will melt away like the morning fog.

Right here.

Right now.



David Housholder is the lead pastor at Robinwood Church in Huntington Beach, CA. He was previously the Teaching Pastor at Hosanna! in Lakeville, MN, and while serving there, he became a great friend of the Lutheran Renewal network. He will be speaking at the August 5-8, 2009 Holy Spirit Conference. To reach David: RobinwoodChurch.com or ThornHeart.com.

Nevertheless

by Mary Ann Herzan

Sometimes the will of God can stun us with its intensity and cost; we find ourselves unable to believe what He is asking as it may be drastic or exceptionally extravagant. Jesus said, on different occasions, "...*narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life*" (Matthew 7:14) and, "...*My yoke is easy and My burden is light*" (Matthew 11:30). Some see this as a contradiction yet we are looking at two sides of the same coin—discovering and doing God's will. Discovering His will most often means entering through the narrow gate (the hard part) in order to do His will where we take His yoke upon us (the easy part) since it is He who works in us to accomplish His purpose. To put it simply, the narrow gate is the cross—the place where we, like Jesus, say "nevertheless" and yield our will to embrace His.

We are prone to look at our circumstances and call them our "cross," but the true cross is in our heart, our will. The cross for Jesus was a choice (see John 10:18 and Matthew 26:53). When Jesus said that those who sought to be His disciples must take up their cross daily, He did not mean that we were to accept anything and everything that happened. He meant that in anything and everything we were to seek and do the will of the Father. This means that the will of God in our lives is not passive acceptance but an active and continuous seeking and obeying. The circumstance is not the entirety of His will but also our response and action in the circumstance.

If we look at the life of Jesus, we see that He went often to the quiet hills. This place of solitude was where He fellowshiped with the Father, being renewed and counseled. I am convinced that Gethsemane was not His first encounter in the struggle of the will. Obviously, it was the most intense because of the magnitude of His upcoming suffering and death, but He was doing in this situation what He had done all along—going apart to learn the Father's heart and receive grace to obey. In public Jesus never apologized for the Father's will; He never guessed or hesitated about it. When He spoke, it was with dignity, quiet confidence, and an unshakable authority people marveled at. This came from "taking up His cross" in private.

Though this applies to all Christians, I believe it is especially important for those in leadership roles. Years ago as I was preparing to teach at a retreat, I felt the Lord say to my heart, "Do not ever presume to speak to My children on My behalf without first speaking to Me." What diplomat would dare, especially in a crisis, speak publicly of his or her personal feelings rather than those of their leader? The diplomat must retreat to hear the heart and mind of the one in charge or great harm could result. Think of how often, in times of a crisis on foreign soil, we hear, "The White House is in constant communication..." I believe this is why we are warned not to raise people to leadership positions too quickly (1 Timothy 5:22). They must be people who have learned to seek and discern the Lord's heart in all situations and who know how to struggle through the narrow gate. The cost to be a true disciple of Jesus is high. The Father longs for us to be His "*planting... that He may be glorified*" (Isaiah 61:3b). "Glorified" here means "to make clear" and the cost for this clarity is to know the narrow gate and difficult way of surrender.

If we look at Gethsemane, we see that Jesus asked Peter, James and John to be with Him in His struggle. We all need and should have those around us who provide a safe place to wrestle with our emotions. Jesus' friends slept during His time of great need; they did not understand the magnitude of what He was going through. Nevertheless, His Father did not abandon Him; He saw...and sent angels to be where friends could not. Even if our friends do not grasp the reality or magnitude of our struggle, our Father does and He will do no less for us than He did for Jesus—He will send what is needed.

James 3:17 tells us, "*But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable.*" When we have wrestled through the narrow gate we find the peace of God that enables us to endure. We are no longer tossed to and fro by different scenarios in our mind; we no longer feel obligated to defend our actions. We may be asked to explain them but that is different than defending them.

Some time ago a friend of mine was struggling with whether a deep desire of her heart was the Lord's will or



not. As I asked her questions she assumed I was saying the desire was not His will and began a mild defense. I told her that I was not looking for a “yes” or “no” but for the imprint of peace that comes from struggling through to the heart of God. We can have peace in very difficult and painful circumstances. To see Jesus move through His final hours after Gethsemane was to see a man at peace. The peace won in the garden of struggle kept Him through a time more difficult and dark than anyone before or since has had to endure.

We all have a “nevertheless” journey before us. We do not need answers from one another as much as we need encouragement to enter the narrow gate and find the peace of God that passes understanding—that does not need to understand. When we empty ourselves and say, “Nevertheless...” Jesus rushes into that emptiness. He does send us a parcel of peace but comes Himself—the Prince of Peace. We discover a fellowship with Him that is more precious than anything; more precious even than

the desire we wrestled with. It is the “life” that is promised after entering the narrow gate.

The most important word I can give you about struggling through the narrow gate is to be honest in the Lord’s presence. As the psalmist says, “*pour out your heart*” (Psalm 62:8); our being real gives Him room to act. Nothing shocks Him; nothing will cause Him to turn away. If you are angry, tell Him. Pour it out so that His grace and power can come in. If you are afraid, verbalize it and then place Him and His promises alongside your fear. Let Him hold you, like a mother with a child, as you wrestle with your heart. No one can understand the depth of your feelings better than He.

Asaph took a “nevertheless” journey and discovered the sweet place of fellowship in his wrestling; you can read about it in Psalm 73. He went into the sanctuary with confusion, envy and anger, yet came out saying:

*“Nevertheless I am continually with You;
You hold me by my right hand.
You will guide me with Your counsel, and
afterward receive me to glory.
Whom have I in heaven but You?
And there is none upon earth that I desire
besides You.”*



Mary Ann Herzan, formerly on staff with Lutheran Renewal, has been ministering through teaching, speaking, and mentoring for over thirty years. She may be contacted at David’s Heart, a ministry of East Immanuel Lutheran Church, 1173 Payne Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55130, or at maherzan@usfamily.net. She will be presenting a workshop at this year’s Holy Spirit Conference.



Tending Your Field of Dreams

On April 17-18, over 650 women gathered to “Tend Their Field of Dreams” at Hosanna! in Lakeville, MN. God’s dreams for this event were larger than anything we could have imagined! There were many testimonies of physical and emotional healing; the Lord brought hope and restoration through the worship and teaching; many were encouraged by personal words of knowledge. And as freedom was realized, His daughters were able to pursue the dreams the Lord had for them since conception—all the innumerable thoughts He had been thinking about them (Ps. 139: 17-18).

Special Note: Out of our thankfulness for what God was doing among us, we took a special offering for The Healing House, a local ministry for women degraded by poverty and addiction (see www.metrohope.org). We were overjoyed to send a gift of \$4,150.11 to that ministry.

Order recordings of the conference on page 8.

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“Tending Your Field of Dreams” Lutheran Renewal Women's Conference
 April 2009 Lakeville, MN Audio & Video Order Form

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