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Remain Urgent

When I first moved to Tulsa, Oklahoma, I had never lived in a tornado zone before. If you're not familiar, this region is where cold, dry air from the north clashes with warm, moist air from the south, creating powerful storms of incredible force. These tempests often follow the same path repeatedly, earning the area the name Tornado Alley, with Tulsa right in its heart. The city has special warning sirens dedicated to alerting residents when these dangerous storms approach.

My wife and I were house-hunting, spending the day driving around Tulsa with Pastor Dave and his wife, who had lived there for many years. We stopped for lunch at a restaurant with large glass windows when the sky began to darken. Soon, rain started falling, and the wind picked up, growing stronger and stronger until the windows rattled slightly. The rain was coming down sideways, and when the doors blew open, I felt panic rising inside me. My beautiful wife squeezed my hand as I waited for someone to shout, "Run!" I was mentally running through every possible way to survive, ready to dive under the table, when I glanced around the room. Most people were calmly eating and talking, including Pastor Dave, who showed no concern whatsoever.

During our first year in Tornado Alley, we heard those warning sirens go off many times. We'd gather the kids and dogs and huddle in our closet until the all-clear was given. But after over twenty years, I've become less reactive to the warnings. My home has never been destroyed, and I've grown hardened to the point where I no longer feel the urgency to stay vigilant. This isn't wise though, because these storms remain incredibly dangerous. Matthew 24:42 *"Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming."*

Sadly, many believers have become desensitized to the message of the end times and no longer feel urgency about the Lord's return. I don't entirely blame them, given the many moments in the past when preachers declared, "This is it!" with absolute certainty.

I've personally lived through at least ten "last days" predictions where someone was convinced the end was here. Over the years, I've thrown out countless audio cassettes and CDs of sermons about the end times. Those messages often named the Antichrist by name, but when that person died, no one offered me my money back. They'd simply release a new series pointing to a different figure to watch out for. Yet, one of the most critical messages the church needs today is about the end times. There's even a movement among some theologians to discredit the concepts of the rapture and tribulation, which is concerning because it can leave people spiritually unprepared. Some argue that focusing on the rapture leads to a lackluster life, just waiting for God to rescue us. But the point of watching isn't about escaping this world, it's about living purposefully to change it.

The focus of watching for Christ's return is to live with expectancy, pursuing God each day as if it could be our last on earth. It's about living holy and obedient to His will, knowing the

trumpet could sound at any moment. Someone once asked Pastor Dave if we were in the last days, and I loved his response. He said, “Well, I can tell you we’re closer today than we were yesterday. Besides, these are my last days, even if Jesus doesn’t return in my lifetime.”

1 Thessalonians 5:1-8 *“But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. For when they say, ‘Peace and safety!’ then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape. But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night. But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation.”*

The world is growing darker and more chaotic, fulfilling prophecies before our eyes. Daniel’s prophecy about people running to and fro and increasing knowledge is strikingly evident when compared to just a hundred years ago. Young people, in particular, need to hear the call to “prepare and watch for Christ’s return.” I tell my kids to live as if Jesus could return today, ensuring they’re ready for the rapture, but to plan their lives as if He won’t come until the next generation.

The modern church often focuses on God’s blessings and personal purpose, losing sight of Him. Our eyes should be fixed on Christ alone, not on ourselves. I’m not looking to the rapture as an escape; I want to overcome and accomplish as much as possible for Him because His return is near, and these are my personal last days. We each have only one lifetime to give to Him, so let’s make it count!

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