

Storm Damage

April 1995

High winds recently blew through Hueytown, leaving behind a big mess and some obvious spiritual analogies.

First, many of the trees blown down had rotten cores. Before the storm they appeared healthy and strong, but the hollow cores could not withstand the howling wind. Isn't this true of some people? They give an outward appearance of faith and spirituality, but when a crisis comes they collapse under the pressure. The Christian must be strengthened in the inner man (Eph 3:16) in order to withstand the storms of life.

Secondly, some trees were simply blown over because their root systems were shallow. The tree may have been otherwise healthy, but it was not firmly anchored in the ground. Jesus said there would be people like this (Mt 13:5-6, 20-21). Their interest in God would last only as long as their lives were stable and secure.

Thirdly, the destructive winds seemed arbitrary and selective. A large tree was left standing in the Horne's yard, but one just like it a few feet away in the neighbor's yard was uprooted. Similarly, the trials of life can affect men arbitrarily. Surviving victims of tragic accidents often wrestle with the guilt of having lived when friends or loved ones have died. But there's often no rationale for such occurrences. We must be thankful for the opportunities we have been given and be good stewards of the lives we have been given.

Fourth, such storms are God's way of naturally pruning dead wood. Many yards were littered with limbs that were dead which needed to come down and make room for the new growth. The trials of our lives can have the same effect. We can acquire bad habits or attitudes which we find hard to dismiss, but the rough storms which we periodically endure can prune our character and help us focus upon what is truly important.

Finally, much costly damage was done indirectly by the storm as falling trees and limbs snapped power lines, smashed roofs and crumpled cars. This, too, occurs when faith fails under stress. If a man loses his faith, his entire family suffers. If a child goes astray, the parents are devastated. A congregation's morale suffers with every backslider's return to the world.

The storms will come. May we stand firm with deep roots, faithful cores, and strong limbs.