

Heeding the Warnings

In 1969, in Pass Christian, Mississippi, a group of people was preparing to have a hurricane party in the face of a storm named Camille.

Were they ignorant of the dangers? Could they have been overconfident? Did they let their egos and pride influence their decision? We will never know.



What we do know is that the wind was howling outside the posh Richelieu Apartments when Police Chief Jerry Peralta pulled up sometime after dark. Facing the beach less than 250 feet from the surf, the apartments were directly in the line of danger. A man with a drink in his hand came out to the second-floor balcony and waved.

Peralta yelled up, “You all need to clear out of here as quickly as you can. The storm’s getting worse.”

But as others joined the man on the balcony, they laughed at Peralta’s order to leave. “This is my land,” one of them yelled back. “If you want me off, you’ll have to arrest me.”

Peralta didn’t arrest anyone, but he wasn’t able to persuade them to leave either. He wrote down the names of the next of kin of the 20 or so people who gathered there to party through the storm. They laughed as he took their names. They had been warned, but they had no intention of leaving.

It was 10:15 p.m. when the front wall of the storm came ashore. Scientists clocked Camille’s wind speed at more than 205 miles-per-hour, the strongest on record. Raindrops hit with the force of bullets, and waves off the Gulf Coast crested as high as 28 feet.

News reports later showed that the worst damage came at the little settlement of motels, go-go bars, and gambling houses known as Pass Christian, Mississippi, where some 20 people were killed at a hurricane party in the Richelieu Apartments. Nothing was left of that three-story structure but the foundation. The only survivor was a 5-year-old boy found clinging to a mattress the following day.

What a tragedy – a tragedy that could have been avoided! Refusing to recognize the danger, the people in the apartments thumbed their noses at the storm, arrogantly choosing a foolhardy adventure with no concern for safety.

But we human beings regularly make decisions whether to heed or ignore warning signs – be it a stop sign, a cigarette, a poor diet, sexual purity, driving under the influence or God’s laws.

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Even nations are confronted with warnings. The Bible chronicles results of choices of the nation of Israel when confronted with warnings. Scripture is replete with advice – and commandments – leading to successful, happy, righteous living. But it also contains consequences for failing to heed the warnings of a loving God.

We have choices to make. God gave us the free will to do so.

If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land (2 Chronicles 7:14 NKJV).

– Beecher Hunter