

Lifelines

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Topic: Fires in Southern California

The Wake-up Call © 2025 by Dr. Ed Jordan

When I used to travel to a lot of conferences as a pastor and missionary, I was always grateful for those hotels that provided a “wake-up call” service. Wake-up calls help us be ready to accomplish the major things we were there to do.

Recently there has been a series of devastating fires in the coastal areas of Pacific Palisades and Malibu. At the time of this writing, the fire burned all day yesterday and is still 0% contained. Palisades and Malibu are decimated. The news showed videos taken by residents as they were trapped in their homes, or trying to knock down walls of fire, or driving their cars with flames on both sides of the road. Survivors in shock and trauma trembled and wept trying to describe it, mostly using terms like “It was like Hell,” or “It was like driving through the enormous flames and furnaces of Hell.”

Having grown up in the West, it is not unusual to watch hills and mountains, engulfed in raging fires and clouds of smoke. What was unusual about this fire was that the burning mountains and roads were filled with thousands of homes nestled densely in the hills and valleys and mountainsides. Furthermore, the flames were so fierce and moved so quickly there was no time to gather pets or important belongings. Please take a few moments to pray and ask God to comfort and care for those who “lost everything” beyond their life.

Events like this can be a wake up call for all of us. We tend to live our lives as though we were invincible, and forget how fragile our lives are in a world where most things are beyond our control. Bad things happen in life, and they happen to Christians as well as non-Christians.

Yet in the midst of these unforeseen crises, the Christian has the assurance that when we enter into fiery scenarios, we do not face them alone. God is with us. In Isaiah 43, we read of God's presence and assistance, His promise to be with us in these hell-like experiences, protect us while in them, and lead us out of the fire-like experiences that roar into our lives. In Isaiah 43:1-3a (NIV84): “But now, this is what the LORD says— He who created you, O Jacob, He who formed you, O Israel: “Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. For I am the LORD, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior;”

This promise by God is undergirded by the salvation that God has provided for each person who has turned to Him. So thank Jesus for taking upon Himself all the punishment for your sins and rebellion against God, and if you have never done so, invite Jesus to come live within your heart, and to live through your life.

As Christians we all go through difficulties and figurative fires in our lives. The difference is that as a Christian, you don't face such experiences alone. God lives within each Christian and He brings us through lots of difficult times. At some point, each of us will

die, but if we have committed our life to Jesus, and He lives within us, we go through the valley of death. Through means we come out the other side of death into the glorious presence of Eternal God, and the heavenly Paradise He has prepared for us.

For those who reject God, the valley of the death exits into Hell, an eternal place of fire and torment. Heaven is real, and so is Hell. The decisions we make now, result in different lives and different outcomes. When I saw the fury of those walls and walls of consuming fires in that California fire, all I could think about was "Thank God that Jesus has provided a way to live our life for God and with God, so that we don't end up surrounded forever in the tormenting fires of Hell." God is not willing for anyone to perish, but desires for every person to repent (turn around, change your life's course, let God forgive you and come live forever within you) and live for God. Things like this fire are a wake-up call for us; it is time to choose Jesus, if you have not done so.

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