



## Sudden Destruction

Something pelted my hat—twice. I was working in the yard under a clear blue sky. It couldn't be raining. Was stuff dropping from the trees? Next day in the same place it happened again. It was that thing yellow jackets sometimes do when you're too close to their nest. They bump you, and then it escalates! I stepped back to look for insects flying in and out of the ground. Nothing—then I looked up. Twenty feet above in a tree was a larger-than-football-sized object surrounded by busy bugs.

I pointed out the nest to my neighbor. "Hey, don't call an exterminator!" he said. "I can fix it easily—with my shotgun!" In our rural neighborhood, firing a gun is legal, as long as you avoid people, property and animals (yellow jackets don't count).

Next evening after dark (yellow jackets have no night vision) he fired two rounds and the problem was solved (Don't try this at home. There are risks associated with blowing things away with a shotgun. State, provincial and local laws may vary).

I know. Wasps play a necessary role in the environment. They eat lots of pesky insects and do other stuff that I can't remember. Yet the location of this nest was untenable, especially if all 2,000 inhabitants should decide I was a threat to their operation.

I feel *some* empathy. There they were, sitting in their living room in their cozy little football, devoutly caring for their young, unaware of the looming catastrophe—until three hundredths of a second after the muzzle blast sent a load of birdshot at about 800 miles per hour, shredding their home with nothing but paper debris and insect parts floating to the ground. Sudden destruction!

I couldn't help but recall 1 Thessalonians 5:1-3: *Brothers and sisters, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, "Peace and safety," destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.*

While this rather scary passage may be about

a future cataclysm, sudden destruction can happen to us anytime—not just huge events like flash floods, tsunamis, earthquakes, wildfires and nuclear war. I'm talking about more personal sudden destructions such as life-threatening diagnoses, accidents, job loss, strokes, broken relationships, deaths—the list goes on. One minute your life seems all good, and the next it's all bad.

1 Thessalonians 5 continues:

*But you, brothers and sisters, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. You are all children of the light and children of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be awake and sober (verses 4-6).*

The light spoken of here is not mere sunlight—it's the Light of Christ. Some see it, some can't. Those who can't yet see the Light might be devastated by life's bombshells. "Children of the Light," by contrast, need not fear or be blindsided. But how does this Light illuminate our way through these sudden destructive events? Here are four ways. Not surprisingly, these are among major factors psychologists identify as keys to coping with trauma. They take on infinitely greater meaning when infused with the Light of Christ.

**Community**—the Light shines through friends, family, groups and even institutions working together for good.

**Flexibility**—the Light shows us new possibilities and gives us vision to navigate abrupt changes.

**Hope**—the Light gives us courage and reveals good outcomes ahead.

**Faith**—the Light emanates from—actually *is*—Jesus who is always with us and for us.

Jesus gives Christ-followers the ability to see in the dark—to see past those sudden destruction events, so we can help others who may be stumbling in their darkness. We can't always escape sudden trouble ourselves, but we can see clearly as we follow the source of our light, who is always drawing us forward, regardless of any obstacles, into the full light of his kingdom. □

—Monte Wolverton