

1991

January David Dunn Talk

David Dunn

DAVID DUNN--TALK AT LITTLE CREEK ACADEMY ON JANUARY 25, 1991

It is a pleasure for me to be here tonight. In the past several months there were many times when I wondered if such an occasion would be possible. I am very glad to return to some of my early memories and the thoughts that I had of this place.

I come tonight to bring both good news and bad news. The bad news you have heard already. The good news is that is not the end of the story. I turn in my Bible to Rev. 21. I find a caring God who will wipe away all tears and has gone to prepare a place for us.

The story I wish to share has an happy ending. I was reunited with my family on Dec. 10th after three and a half months of being separated from my wife and children. Not all stories have happy endings. Sometimes we don't understand. If I say anything tonight that I would like you to remember it is this--say to yourself that God cares about me. In future events we will be challenged to give up on the thought that God cares about me.

I was the gulf section leader in the Arabian Peninsula. We were attempting to establish churches in small countries. I arrived in January of 1990. I was trying to find out if there were churches--I would happen to meet people who would be an Adventist or know of one. The Holy Spirit was planting the seed. I was to be gone for 8 weeks. After 6 weeks I became lonely for my family. Something drove me to change my plans so I canceled and arrived home the night before the invasion. Wednesday, everything was normal. We decided to check into a nice hotel. Kuwait had highest per capita income in the world--Pizza Hut, Baskin Robins, fresh fruits and vegetables brought in daily. You could have anything you wanted. The temperature often goes to 140-145 degrees so on Wednesday afternoon we checked into a hotel that had a swimming pool. Your feet would blister if you stepped on the pavement. The hotel was about 2 miles from the airport, because of that it was well insulated so you could not hear the planes. Early in the a.m. we turned on the TV and picked up CNN. The news flash was that Kuwait had been invaded and was now the 19th providence of Iraq. I can not explain the feelings, one part of you just wants to deny it. We opened the curtains and saw 6-8 lines of tanks and troops coming into the city. You had to face the reality of the situation. For the first 2 1/2 weeks we traveled freely around the city. The Iraqi soldiers did not harass the Americans, they were kind and courteous. No threats. One day there was an announcement. All westerners were supposed to report to a hotel. If found harbored by a Kuwaiti they would kill the Kuwaiti. We stayed in our apartment. Trying to keep 3 boys ages 1-5 quiet--no children sounds. Would someone come to the door? When some were rounded up they were separated--husband was used as human shield at military installation and the families were allowed to leave.

Kuwait had an army and a good air force. On the night of the invasion they had the warning that there was going to be an invasion still the sentries were asleep. All the military equipment had been locked away in deep storage areas. Makes me think of myself and my church.

There are sounds and sights around me. Can you see the same signs that I see? I'm not here to put a downer on you. There is something happening in the day we live--the coming of Jesus is near.

Kuwait is the most advanced and progressive country in the middle east. In a four hour period it had digressed to medieval mentality, raping, killing, stealing was all going on. Whole sections of the city were burned. We can spend all of our energy working toward good goals. But if they are not in tune with God's plan for our lives--we can be wealthy and advanced in education--but when it come to the bottom line will it make any difference.

We had just received our shipment from the General Conference--toys, books, etc just about the time I left on my trip. I was happy to come back and help open boxes of things that I had not seen for a year and one half. We lost it all but it didn't matter because God protected me and my family. After a long night of prayer, my wife and children joined the British convoy headed for Baghdad. Harassment and the dangers involved turned the normally 8 hour trip into a grueling 17 hours in the heat. I had to come to grips with the fact that I might never see them again. My situation was serious. I can trust the kind of God who has met all my needs--my physical and spiritual needs. My need for salvation and my guarantee for eternal life. I see an empty tomb that guarantees what he has done for us. He has walked this way and understands.

I didn't go to Kuwait on my own whim, I felt that God had lead us as a family. It appeared that the Lord was using me in His ministry. Would the same God just leave us? Regardless of the outcome at the moment, whatever the devil may throw at us, what ever Satan does, he does not write the final paragraph of the story. God writes the end of the story. I trust in Him and I know we can be overcomers.

The day after my wife and children left, God brought an American to stay with me for a month. During that time, the situation degenerated. A friend 3 houses from my apartment spent twenty-three days in his air-conditioner ducts where he had stored macaroni, spaghetti, water and blankets and believe it or not his dog. While there he saw his apartment systematically and completely stripped--electrical, carpeting, plumping and fixtures. It was all sent to Baghdad. A British friend was turned in after living with an Iraq family for 7 years. The soldiers took the seven members of the Kuwaiti family ranging in ages from 7-60 years of ages and within thirty seconds they were all dead--shot in cold blood. Some Kuwaiti's, Moslems though they are, understand the practical meaning of gospel and went out of their way to help those of us who were hiding.

I think back to the time when I was sitting in these seats myself. At that time I could not think 20 years down the line. What can I say--how does a person survive three and one half months in hiding. How do you live day by day with danger. You might be captured. A bomb might

land on your house. Then there is the boredom. It was three and one-half weeks before I learned that my family was safe. It seemed an eternity. I remember December 10 when our plane arrived. I cannot describe the emotions, the anticipation, the reality of seeing my wife and 3 children again. Then to be made aware that my world wide family was praying for me as well as many others. Why did Hussain choose to release us? God is in charge.

My hair is not normally black, I have light brown hair. I'll tell you about that. It was around Thanksgiving time. That is a time to be home with your family. I decided to use my own plans. I got some equipment--maps, water bottles etc. An Indian friend came and said it might be possible for me to go with an Asian convoy into Jordan. Someone brought Miss Clairol--I put it on my hair, not in a very neat fashion. My skin on my face was stained--I decided to stain my body--I was oreo style. It apparently passed because I went out into the street for a few moments and no one gave me second look. I went through the check points and then realized that these plans were my own. I had not prayed about this. I was not comfortable. I had no papers, and if they realized I was an American I would be treated differently than the others in the caravan. My friends would most likely be killed and I was not willing to put that risk on my conscience. I went back after being away from my house for less than 30 minutes. The brown took about 10 days to come off. On Wednesday night before Thanksgiving, I got a call from some British friends who lived nearby. They do not celebrate Thanksgiving like we do but they said they would like to cook a dinner for me. Late Wednesday night, I made my way carefully to their house. There was a large gun fight in the street on Thursday morning. These were not unusual. From time to time the resistance would select check points--on one side of my house was a tank and on the other a cannon. Many nights gun battles would go on. Once a shell came through my window and hit my wall. We had areas we would hide in--sewers, air conditioning ducts, false walls and water heaters. I could not see what was going on. After two hours there was no follow up. Often they would go door to door but nothing happened this time. We came out and finished up the meal preparations and had a good afternoon playing games following the meal. Thursday night I went home. During the time I was gone my apartment had been ransacked--all personal papers and valuable had been taken. Was it by accident that they raided my apartment one of the only times I was away? I happened to be on a chain of those who helped people relocate if they found themselves in dangerous situations. A couple of days before a friend on our chain had been captured and his Kuwaiti friend had been shot. All of the people on the chain had been rounded up but me.

Never did I have a need for food. I could write a book--1000 and 1 ways to deal with boredom. How do you deal with this. From September 2 until December 10 I was virtually alone. I had a T.V. and telephone as well as short wave radio. When they sacked my apartment there was a \$5000 computer and a \$50 radio. They took the radio. Most of the Iraqi's are simple people. They come from agricultural villages. They had experienced war for 8-10 years. They were being forced to fight again. The soldiers were fed only once every 2 or 3 days. Their clothing was limited many had no shoes. There would be several soldiers and only enough bullets for one gun. This was their situation. They were begging for food. Their circumstances were worse than mine. At first I prayed for the Lord to watch over me. My prayer was self-centered. God will see us though. He does not promise a life of ease. There is no guarantee of bliss and a carefree existence. We are told there will be problems. As our problems become greater, we can trust our God. I started to change my prayer as I saw the soldiers and started to pray for them too.

On December 10 I was to be with my family. What anticipation--I wanted to go and see my wife and children! How was my youngest son, he was a year and a half and I had only spent three and one-half months of his life with him. He had just learned to walk, was he learning to talk. My wife and boys, each was so special--how I longed for the moment when I could take them in my arms and give them the biggest hug and kiss I could.

Then I began to think--did I feel the same way about Christ? Did I long for that moment when He would come? I tearfully say that many times I have not as I have been distracted by the things that I think are important here. I remember as I was studying the book of Revelation in Bible class here. I wanted to pinpoint the exact time on the prophecy time table. When was the moment when the gavel went down and we were at the point of no return. Do you know what I am talking about. I wanted to know so that 5 seconds before I could say, "Yes, Jesus, take me." I would live my life and do my thing until the last minute and then I would join the right side. I knew what the right side was. Have you done that? Of course not. I see instead now in my heart a growing desire for my Lord. I want you to have that same intense, same constant abiding desire--Jesus, bring this to an end. It has gone on long enough. I think when God's people began to cry out in righteous living He will bring it to an end. His coming will be hastened. Then we will be reunited with our world family.

You don't have to be finished with the seminary to help finish the work. Has God chosen you? You have a special responsibility. I claim this heritage too. I am a graduate of Little Creek--the heritage you have as being a part of this school. It is a privilege. The opportunities you have here. The attentions and concerns that are bestowed upon you. The God centeredness of the school and attempts to follow guidelines. How we use these privileges and how faithful we are day by day in the small things will determine what happens when tragedy comes. The character we form day by day. I challenge you to be faithful in little things so He can use you in greater things.

I'm glad I'm away from Kuwait. However my mind and thoughts are still there. They are our brothers and sisters. There is much suffering and pain. What do we need to do to bring about His soon return. I think we can say, Lord take my life and use in what ever way you can to hasten your coming. Will you join with me?