

I want to thank the pastor for having us. I want to thank my friend T.D. Jakes for rallying the armies of compassion to help somebody like the mayor.

The response of this country to—has been amazing. But T.D. tells me about church family members of his who have adopted 20 people of the—from New Orleans. The pastor here has got his gymnasiums full of families, and volunteers are now responding to help the families. I want to thank every family member who's helping somebody who has been displaced. I want to thank every church member who's helping people who are displaced—who have been displaced.

America can be proud of the efforts of the churches and synagogues and mosques and community organizations that are helping these people. And this is a long-term project, to help these people. And this country is going to be committed to doing what it takes to help people get back on their feet. And that's why I've come back to this State, and that's why I'm going to Mississippi.

Again, I want to thank the pastor. The response of this church is indicative of the response of many around this Nation, and I mean cities big and cities small, families with, you know, who have got a lot of money and families with little money, all opening their arms to a brother and sister in need.

And again, I want to thank you, pastor. Thank you, T.D., for helping to call people to action. I want to thank the mayor, thank the folks of Louisiana. We've got a lot of work to do, and that's why I'm here to tell people, we'll get it done.

Thank you all.

Q. [*Inaudible*—does the Government have—

Ongoing Relief Efforts

The President. So long as anybody's life is in danger, we've got work to do. That's why I want people to be assured we're going to do it. And—but remember, this is a project that not only deals with the immediate; we're going to have to deal with the long term as well. The immediate needs are being taken care of right here, and I fully understand there's a lot of work to be done.

Q. [*Inaudible*—the Federal Government doing the best it can now?

The President. I think all levels of Government are doing the best they can. If it's not going right, we'll make it right.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:30 a.m. in the evacuee shelter at the Bethany World Prayer Center. In his remarks, he referred to Larry Stockstill, senior pastor, Bethany World Prayer Center; Bishop Thomas D. Jakes, Sr., chief executive officer, The Potter's House of Dallas, Inc., Dallas, TX; and Mayor Melvin L. "Kip" Holden of Baton Rouge, LA.

Remarks at the Emergency Operations Center in Baton Rouge, Louisiana

September 5, 2005

First of all, thanks for doing your duty. You've faced one of the greatest challenges our country has ever faced. As a result of your compassion and your hard work and your dedication, a lot of people's lives were saved, and I want to thank you for that. I hope that makes you feel good, to know that you helped save life.

We've got a lot of work to do. I told the Governor and the Senators and the Congress people, I said, "You know, if it's not right, we're going to fix it, and if it is right, we're going to keep doing it." And this is just the beginning of a huge effort to—and we're going to continue to save life. But you've got to know that lives are still being saved as we speak because thousands of people are taking in these displaced souls, in their homes and churches and synagogues and mosques and providing love and compassion and food.

This is one of these disasters that will test our soul and test our spirit. And—but we're going to show the world, once again, that not only we will survive, but that we will be stronger and better for it when it's all said and done, that amidst this darkness, there is light. And I want to thank you all for providing light, immediate light to people who needed help. You make your State and your local governments and your country proud.

God bless you and your families. May God bless the victims, and may God continue to bless our country. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:05 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Kathleen Babineaux Blanco of Louisiana.

Remarks to the Community in Poplarville, Mississippi

September 5, 2005

[The President's remarks are joined in progress.]

—out of this despair is going to come a vibrant coast. It's—again, I understand if you're saying to yourself, “Well, it's hard for me to realize what George W. is saying, because I've seen the rubble and I know what has happened to my neighbors.” But I'd like to come back down here in about 2 years and walk your streets and see how vital this part of the world is going to be.

I can't wait to join you in the joy of welcoming neighbors back into neighborhoods, and small businesses up and running, and cutting those ribbons that somebody is creating new jobs. That's what I think is going to happen.

I just want you to know that when I'm thinking about how we can help this part of the world, Mississippi is on my mind. Mississippi is a part of the future of this country, and part of that future is to help you get back up on your feet. And I'm confident that your United States Senator Trent Lott, if I don't say it loud enough, he will. *[Laughter]* He'll remind us. But I appreciate you taking time out of your day.

And by the way, I'm traveling with good company. My wife, Laura, is with me too.

Let me conclude by asking for God's blessings on you all and your families and friends, and let you know we're here for the long term. I understand. I understand the damage. I understand the devastation. I understand the destruction. I understand how long it's going to take. And we're with you. That's what I want you to know. God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:12 p.m. at Pearl River Community College. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks Following a Cabinet Meeting and an Exchange With Reporters

September 6, 2005

The President. Thank you all for coming. My message to the Cabinet this morning is this: This administration is not going to rest until every life can be saved, until families are reconnected, until this recovery is complete. Our goals—our immediate goals are these: We want to complete the search-and-recovery; we want to restore essential services; we want to drain the water in the affected areas and begin removing debris; we want to—and are assessing public health and safety matters.

I've asked the Vice President to go down to the affected region on Thursday. He will go down to assess our recovery efforts. He will help me determine whether or not we're meeting these goals. He'll work with Secretary Chertoff and others to make sure that we remove any obstacles, bureaucratic obstacles that may be preventing us from achieving our goals. In other words, bureaucracy is not going to stand in the way of getting the job done for the people.

I was briefed on plans to immediately help our folks, plans to reconnect families, plans to make sure health care is available. And Secretary Leavitt gave me a good brief—plans on housing, both immediate and long-term housing. Most importantly, I was briefed by members of my Cabinet about how we're going to make sure that people who are owed a Social Security check, get their Social Security check. At the center in Baton Rouge I went to yesterday, I remember clearly a person saying, “When am I going to get my Social Security check?” And it's important to note, people understand we have a strategy to make sure the benefits that are due are going to get to them.

Now, we understand people are scattered out across the country, but we have an obligation to make sure that whether a veteran's benefit or an unemployment benefit or a Social Security benefit gets to these people. And so we have a strategy in place, and we're going to implement that strategy—to find people who are in those shelters or in