

No Fear of the Storm

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For many years we have been warned that a financial storm is coming that will pale the great depression. It appears that storm has come. It is only a matter of months, perhaps weeks, before the financial thunder roars, the rain pours, and the floods wreck and distort our lives. I often thought that perhaps I would escape the hard times and that it would be my children who would experience them; now I know that we will experience them together.

Recently God gave me insight into how I might respond during this time and I cannot say that I have *no fear of the storm*. In His graciousness God also gave insight into how to prepare before the storm hits, and how to endure when the storm rages.

TO WEATHER THE STORM, PSALM 1:1-3 LETS ME KNOW THAT I NEED TO MAKE THE BIBLE MY NUMBER ONE DELIGHT.

This has been a favorite Scripture of mine for years; it contrasts trusting God with trusting politics, education, etc. It makes clear that trusting God involves finding pleasure in God's word so that we think and consider it throughout our day, letting it guide our lives. It is this continual focus on God that brings prosperity and comfort to God's people.

The Prophet Jeremiah adds additional detail to David's words when he writes that the roots of the tree "shall not see when heat cometh" (Jeremiah 17:5-8). Think about that: troubles are on every side; everything has been taken from you; your life is on the line everyday; yet you don't feel the heat (pressure, despair, rejection, worry, etc.). It's incredible to consider, but the hard times can be experienced without being overwhelmed. You understand that God is in charge of all storms and He will get you through this one.

The key to living through a storm without fear is to saturate and delight yourself in God's word. Look forward to reading and meditating upon the word in greater ways than you would delight in a movie or time with friends.

The Apostle Paul is a great example of one who has no fear of the storms. Paul knew he would experience persecutions in every city he would enter (Acts 20:22-24). Yet he writes that "none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself." Paul's focus was not upon his great troubles, but upon the things of God. His focus on God raised him above even the preservation of his earthly life.

One word of caution needs to be added: Paul knew the actuality of God. His faith was not ideological, but experiential. God raised him up as an example to emulate. You and I can have the same faith that Paul had, so that we can say with him:

"We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. " (2 Corinthians 4:8-10)

TO WEATHER THE STORM, JAMES 1:2-4 REMINDS ME THAT THE STORMS OF LIFE ARE FAITH RELEASERS AND HIGHLY BENEFICIAL TO ME.

Take a look at this passage from the Apostle James:

“My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.” (James 1:2-4)

Notice that James encourages us to recognize that it is a good thing when troubles come. Why? Because troubles develop patience and patience grows us to perfection. Troubles are the stress agents that help us to grow and release our faith. How do you know if you live by faith? You will never know if your life is stress and trouble free. The only way you will know if you are patient is if someone tries your patience; nor will you know how loving you really are if you don't have opportunity to be MUD (mean, unkind, and despicable). The way to know if you truly trust God is to consider your response if you lost your job, life savings, or health. God has ordained troubles and temptations to be faith developers.

God's desire is not to help us build a life on earth: the earth is presently the devil's territory (2 Corinthians 4:4). God desires to train us to become His sons and kings in His eternal Kingdom. The curriculum for this training is simple: don't put your trust in anything that this world has to offer; trust in God. Though He is unseen, God is not nonexistent. He will take care of each of us when we stop trusting those things we can see (Matthew 6:19-34). To help develop our trust in Him, He will soon take away all of our resources if necessary. It is when our resources are gone that faith can be released. It is when troubles arise that faith comes alive.

Faith also comes alive at that time we need it, not a moment too soon or too late.

Elisha was promised a double portion of Elijah's spirit if he saw him taken from the earth (2 Kings 2:9-10). Elisha saw him disappear with the chariots of fire and received the double portion he asked for (2 Kings 2:11-12); yet he did not know or feel that he had been empowered. It wasn't until he put-into-action what he saw Elijah do that he knew God's empowerment:

He took up also the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and went back, and stood by the bank of Jordan; And he took the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and smote the waters, and said, Where is the LORD God of Elijah? and when he also had smitten the waters, they parted hither and thither: and Elisha went over (2 Kings 2:13-14).

God's power was known at the point-of-contact, the moment the cloak hit the water. God is not interested in helping out with our whimsical fancy, but will be there for us at the moment we exercise our faith.

Peter also illustrates this lesson in Matthew 14:26-31. Jesus was walking on the water. Peter asked to walk on the water also. Jesus told Peter to come, and he did. When the storm came, Peter was afraid and began to sink. Jesus did not help until Peter cried out, “*Lord, save me.*” It wasn't until Peter put-into-action and cried out to Jesus that Jesus saved him. God's power was known at the point-of-contact, the moment Peter cried out in his sinking.

In Luke 8:22-25, when Jesus was in a ship with His disciples, He was fast asleep when a storm came, filling the ship with water and putting everyone in jeopardy. The disciples were helpless. Jesus continued to sleep, oblivious to the storm, until His disciples came to him and woke him, saying “*Master, master, we perish.*” Then he arose, and rebuked the wind and the raging of the water: and they ceased, and there was calm. It wasn't until the disciples' put-into-action by

waking Jesus that Jesus ended the storm, calming the sea. God's power was known at the point-of-contact, the moment the disciples woke Jesus from His sleep.

The assurance here is that when we are in the storm God will take care of us when we need Him, at the moment when faith and crises merge.

**TO WEATHER THE STORM, THE FOLLOWING SCRIPTURE REMINDS ME THAT
GOD WILL PROVIDE WHEN WE ARE IN THE STORM.**

Scripture: Psalm 112:7-8
The Promise: No fear during hard times.
The Requirement: Make sure heart is focused, established and trusting in the Lord.

Scripture: Psalm 31:19-20
The Promise: God will protect us.
The Requirement: Fear and trust God, not people.

Scripture: Isaiah 34:2, 8; 35:3-4
The Promise: God will come and save us.
The Requirement: Be strong and fear not.

Scripture: 1 Samuel 4:3
The Promise: God will protect.
The Requirement: Take God's presence with you.

Scripture: Isaiah 40:28-31
The Promise: God will give power and strength.
The Requirement: Wait upon the Lord.

Scripture: John 14:27
The Promise: You will have peace during troubles.
The Requirement: Trust God.

Soon we will be in the storm. To prepare ourselves, we need to 1) make Scripture our number one delight and pleasure 2) recognize that storms come to develop and grow our faith.

*When the days are long, and sorrows from all sides are found
Will the living grace of God comfort; will it in you abundantly abound?*

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