

*How to Have Peace in the Midst of the Storm*

One of the things that becomes obvious to us very quickly in life is the fact that there's not much smooth sailing. Romans 8 tells us that at this present time the Creation is under the bondage of corruption. Ever since the fall of man in the Garden the effects of the fall have been felt. There's pain and sorrow and sickness and death. There are natural disasters, like floods and tornadoes and earthquakes. And there are man-made problems caused by jealousy, pride and greed.

Job said, "Man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward." David wrote, "Many of the afflictions of the righteous." Jesus said, "In the world you shall have tribulation." The storms of life are going to come. There will be times when the darkness will seem to envelop us and it will look like we're going to go under. But in these times Jesus has a question for us. He asks, "Where is your faith?"

The pollster, George Barna reports that over 70 million Americans today are struggling to find some meaning in life and that over 50% of Americans struggle with some type of depression at some time in their lives.

In his book *In the Eye of the Storm*, Max Lucado writes, We all have a way of completing this sentence: "If God is God, then....There will be no financial collapse in my family. My children will never be buried before me. People will treat me fairly. This church will never divide. My prayers will be answered."

It's when these types of expectations go unmet that doubt begins to set in. We question God's love for us. We wonder if God is trying to punish us.

How do we face the storms of life? Is it really possible to have peace in the midst of the storm? Open your Bibles with me today to **Luke Chapter 8 pg 1001.**

Jesus' disciples faced a terrifying ordeal at sea. They honestly thought they weren't going to make it. But out of their experience we can learn some critical lessons about life.

*The first is this: All Storms Aren't Caused by Our Sin. In fact sometimes God will lead us into a storm!*

**Read vs 22-23**

The fishing boats on Galilee in Jesus' day didn't have keels. They were relatively flat-bottomed so they could be easily pulled up on the beach to unload and used in the shallows along the shore.

A first century fishing boat was recovered in 1986 near Migdal at the northern end of the Sea of Galilee. It shows that stability would come primarily from the width of boat, not from a keel.

A big sail without a keel is a disaster waiting to happen if the fishermen were taken by surprise.

Apparently that is what happened this late afternoon as Jesus and his disciples sailed across the lake to the eastern shore. Apparently this was the boat they were accustomed to using during Jesus' Galilean ministry. Maybe it was Peter's. Mark also mentions, "And there were other boats with them" (Mark 4:36).

This "lake" was also called the Sea of Galilee. The Sea of Galilee is a relatively small body of water about thirteen miles long North running to South, seven miles across at its widest point, and 165 feet deep at its deepest point. It lies in the Jordan Rift Valley, at 696 feet below sea level, surrounded by hills on the East and West that rise to more than 1,000 feet. To the South the Jordan River flows out of the Sea of Galilee to the Dead Sea. To the North is the narrow Hula Valley.

At lake level the temperature is commonly above 100°. When cool air from the uplands sweeps down to the surface of the water, sudden and violent storms can occur.

Dr. W.M. Christie, who spent many years in Galilee, says that during these storms the winds seem to blow from all directions at the same time. They can rush down the narrow gorges in the hills and hit the water at an angle.

He gives this vivid description of one incident:

"A company of visitors was standing on the shore at Tiberias, and, noting the glassy surface of the water and the smallness of the lake, they expressed doubts as to the possibility of such storms as those described in the gospels. Almost immediately the wind sprang up.

In twenty minutes the sea was white with foam-crested waves. Great billows broke

over the towers at the corners of the city walls, and the visitors were compelled to seek shelter from the blinding spray, though now two hundred yards from the lakeside."

In less than half an hour the calm sunshine had become a raging storm.

I can just imagine a gust of wind in the full sail that tips the boat just once so that water pours in over the sides and begins to swamp the boat. Immediately, Peter, James and John the experienced fisherman shift their positions to correct the boat, but it's too late. Now the boat is riding low, partly filled with water, and the waves are starting to come up.

A wave or two breaking over them would fill the boat completely, and it would sink there in the middle of the lake. The disciples are gripped with fear as this storm builds in strength.

Here were Jesus hand picked disciples. These were the guys who had left all to follow Him. They weren't in rebellion. They weren't all deep in sin. They were sincere followers of Jesus Christ but they were in a deadly storm.

They weren't there because God had forgotten about them. They weren't there because God was punishing them. They were there because they were following Jesus and that's where Jesus led them!

Sometimes God will lead us into a storm. This is where our expectations of God and reality clash. We expect God to only lead us to calm water and sunshine. We want puffy white clouds and blue skies. We have a hard time grasping that a loving God would allow us to suffer as we follow His leadership.

But that's exactly what happened to the disciples and it's what so often happens in our own lives. We can get into the storms of life in two ways. One is to run from God's will like Jonah did. He ended up in a storm and eventually in the belly of the fish. The other way is by following Christ. The disciples were in a storm because they had followed God! It's inevitable that followers of Christ will have storms in their lives and sometimes God leads us right into them. But, He does it for a purpose. Jesus Christ had a purpose for leading His disciples into this storm and God has the very same purpose for us.

Remember, Jesus could have prevented this storm. Think of all that God could

have prevented - sin - pain - heartache - Satan. God could have destroyed Satan but he chose not to. He could have created us all without any choice but to serve Him and Love Him, but He didn't. He's given everyone a choice. God has given us a choice in the midst of all the hard times and with all the temptations we face to love Him and serve Him. That's what makes love - love it's a choice.

Remember, God chose to love us first. He didn't have to. He doesn't owe us a thing. God could get along fine without us. He's self-existent and self-sufficient. He existed for all of eternity past without us.

But God chose to create this world and all that is in it. God chose to create human beings with the capacity to think and make decisions. He chose to create us with the power to choose. We were made in His image.

God gave the first two human beings the power to choose. He placed them in a perfect environment. He communicated directly with them and when the opportunity arose they chose to disobey their Creator. Human beings have been disobeying their Creator ever since.

You and I have chosen to disobey our Creator. God codified His standards of holiness for the nation of Israel in the Mosaic Law. All of the law can be distilled down into the 10 commandments God gave to Moses on Mt. Sinai.

*You shall have no other gods before Me* Is there anyone in this room who hasn't at some time worshipped at the altar of some other god? Money, possessions, success, someone we love, even our family?

*You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain* Is anyone here guiltless on that one. That doesn't just mean swearing. It means using God's name in an empty, hollow, idle way.

*Honor your father and your mother* Done that one 100% of the time?

*You shall not murder.* You say, "Finally I'm safe on one. I haven't murdered anyone."

Remember Jesus said: *You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.'* But I say to you that

*whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And ...whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire.*

These commandments deal with more than externals. They deal with the heart.

*You shall not commit adultery.* Jesus explained that one too. *"You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.*

*You shall not steal.* Is there anyone in this room who can honestly say that they've never taken something that didn't belong to them at any time in their entire life?

*You shall not bear false witness.* How about that one. Can anyone say they've never lied?

*You shall not covet* The Apostle Paul said before I was a Christian I thought I was OK with God. Then I really reread the 10th commandment and realized that God was interested in my heart. Sure he had coveted. So have you. So have I.

When we measure ourselves against the righteous standard of God we come up woefully short. The Bible says *the wages of sin is death!* According to the Bible hell is real and it's the place of punishment for sinners.

Now if that's all there was to it we'd be in trouble. If all we had was the law of God we'd have no hope because God's Law is a righteous standard but it has no provision for failure.

But God... *But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*

This is so important for us to understand. God chose to love us. God sent His Son to pay for our sins. Jesus Christ never broke those commandments. We did! But He took the penalty in our place. That was God's choice.

I can't explain it all as to why God made that choice but He did. What I do know is this. If God loved us enough to send His Son into this sin-cursed world to suffer

and bleed and die for my sins, then I know He loves me absolutely. I know His love is limitless. I know that He won't lead me into any storms without going with me.

1) *All Storms Aren't Caused by Our Sin. In fact sometimes God will lead us into a storm!*

2) *God Uses the Storms to Build Our Confidence in Him.*

They were sailing the boat but where was Jesus? Asleep! Jesus was Asleep!

Now get the picture. The winds are blowing furiously. The boat is being tossed around. The waves are crashing over the side. The boat is taking on water. Jesus disciples are terrified. **Read 24a**

These guys figured this was it. This boat was going down and they all would drown. Didn't Jesus care?

**Turn back to the Gospel of Mark Chapter 4 Pg 972 read Vs 38**

That sounds pretty believable doesn't it? It sounds kind of like our petty blaming of God for allowing various circumstances to enter our life and threaten the status quo. "Don't you care?"

How could Jesus sleep? He could sleep because He had implicit trust in His heavenly Father. The Son of God knew that He was in His Father's care. That His life was in the hands of God. From a human perspective, Jesus in His humanity had faith. He was asleep because he trusted God, but He was also asleep to teach His disciples an important lesson about trust.

What a test for the patience and the faith of the disciples. The longer they waited the worse things got. It looked as though Christ had neglected them. It seemed as though He had forgotten them. God often tests our faith in much the same way, doesn't He? Not testing it to see if it exists. He knows that without the test. But testing it, or proving it to strengthen it. God wants our faith strengthened.

The Apostle Peter explained it this way: *In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith--of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire--may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. (I Peter 1:7)*

So frequently our circumstances are dark and conditions are all against us. We wonder, "Where's God? Is He asleep?" It seems like we're out there to go it alone. We need to remember something, God is never in a hurry. No matter how much our unbelief and doubt wants to push Him to go faster He waits in His own good time. God is omnipotent. He's all powerful. He can't fail. And because His omnipotence is combined with infinite wisdom and love we can be certain that God not only does every thing in the right way, but that He does it at the best time. The prophet Isaiah wrote *"therefore, the Lord will wait; that He may be gracious to you; And therefore, He will be exalted, that He may have mercy on you. For the Lord is a God of Justice. Blessed are all those who wait for Him."* (Isaiah 30:18)

Was it wrong for the disciples to call on Jesus? Should they have just sat while the waves crashed over the side of the boat and just watched the Lord sleep? Jesus wants us to turn to Him not only in our moment of need but with everything. I believe that's exactly what Christ wanted. The thing that was wrong was their desperation. Jesus wanted them to turn to Him in faith, not doubting Him as if He didn't care for them.

In a sense they had faith mixed with skepticism. It was mixed with doubt. They woke Him to do something but they wondered if He really cared.

Ralph Wilson writes: They had seen him heal the sick and cast out demons. But when they returned to the dangers of the environment where they conducted their livelihood, the waters of this inland lake, they seemed to suddenly forget Jesus' power, and who he seemed to be. Instead, they wake him in panic and ask him if he even cares what is happening to them. How easily we compartmentalize our lives, one compartment for church and Christianity, another for our family, and a third for our work. And to keep our vessel from sinking, there is a watertight door that separates each compartment from each other compartment. Sometimes our Christianity is hardly able to pass into that sphere where we struggle and sweat and are sometimes overwhelmed and near to capsizing.

- 1) *All Storms Aren't Caused by Our Sin. In fact sometimes God will lead us into a storm!*
- 2) *God Uses the Storms to Build Our Confidence in Him.*
- 3) *The Key to Having Peace in the Midst of the Storm is Faith*

**Back to Luke 8. Verse 24 continues... Read 24b-25**

I think for the disciples, the Stilling of the Storm was one of those "watershed" experiences. Before this they had seen Jesus as a teacher and miracle worker. One they loved, one who brought them the words of life, one who promised nearness of the Kingdom of God. Perhaps he was even the Messiah.

But now they saw him as transcending the realm of a man, even a spiritual man. Now they saw him do what only God can do.

As young Jewish boys they had memorized the account of Moses parting the Red Sea. Now they had just witnessed a miracle on that magnitude.

One minute the wind was blowing and the waves were crashing and the next it was perfectly calm. They were stunned. If you had been there, you would have been stunned too. Even Peter was at a loss for words.

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Are you looking for peace this morning? Are you looking for that place where the wind never blows and the waves never crash? If you are, remember this. No matter where you go on the planet, storms are going to follow you. Storms are going to find you. Even when you think you've ducked them all, they'll find you.

The question is, when they find you, what are you going to do? What are your options? Think about it. You could try to row your way out.

Far too often, we get into a storm of life and we expend all sorts of energy and effort to get out of the mess we are in. If it's a family crisis we try to get the opinion of everybody we know. If it's a financial crisis, we pull out the credit cards or call the loan company. If it's a job crisis we scramble to get out the resumes. In other words, we use our own human effort to get us out of that storm. The problem is, far too often, there is nothing we can do in the storm.

The disciples couldn't have rowed their way out if they'd have given it all they had. If the purpose of the storm is to increase our faith, trying to duck out of it wouldn't help us anyway.

We'd be trying to avoid the very lesson God wants to teach us.

The other thing they could've done was just to try to ride it out. Just try to hold on and survive.

Sometimes we think if we just sit still and try not to worry, maybe it will all go away.

I can hang tough until it is over. This too, shall pass. Let's just try and survive. But again, if the purpose of the storm is to increase our faith and all we're doing is hanging on, our focus will be the storm but we'll miss God and what He's doing?

So here's the question; Will you try to squelch the tempest yourself, or will you rest in the sufficiency of the presence of the only One who can rebuke the wind and the raging of the water? Will you rest confidently in the arms of the One who promised in the Psalms "Be still and know that I am God. I will be exalted in the Heavens, I will be exalted in the earth?"

Jesus not only rebuked the wind and the waves, but He also rebuked the Disciples too and said to them, Where is your faith? That's a question we ought to ask the moment we find ourselves in that place where the wind howls, and the waves roll.

Up until now, these Disciples looked like men who had allowed Christ to be in control of their lives. At least they were when they got into the boat. But the sky was clear when they got into the boat.

What's really amazing is that in the end the disciples weren't sure which made them more afraid, the storm or Jesus' power.

The question that confronts us today is, "Why are you so fearful?" *Jesus asks. "How is it that you have no faith?" Hebrews 11:6 tells us "Without faith, it is impossible to please Him, for He who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him."*

If Jesus can stretch out His hand over a storm and say, "Peace, be still," imagine what He can do for us.

Where is your faith? Have you trusted Jesus Christ as God's provision for your sin? Do you have the faith that brings peace with God. Romans 5:1 *Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,*

Rather than the judgement of God because we've broken His law we have peace with God because we're forgiven through faith.

If you have trusted Christ as Savior and made peace with your creator, the next question would be do you have the peace of God in your life? Phil 4:6 *Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your*

*requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*

We'll never escape all the storms but by God's grace we can have peace in the midst.