

Lessons In the Storms of Life

One of my favorite cartoon characters, Charlie Brown, builds a beautiful sand castle; & having worked on it for hours, he stands back to look at it. Just as he is admiring it, a storm comes up, & the rains come to **sweep away** his sand castle! His beautiful masterpiece is leveled! Charlie Brown says to himself: "**There must be a lesson in this, but I'm not sure what it is.**" Have you been there? Wondered that?

I suppose that everyone of us, at one time or another, have had our sand castles swept away! **Life is so full of storms!** No one is excluded from the storms of life. **Some people experience so many storms in their life that whenever they look up all they see are dark clouds!** Have you sometimes felt that you have had **more than your fair share?** That at times life is ridiculous?! Some storms are caused by the **devil**; sometimes they are caused by **other people**; sometimes **we cause** our own storms; sometimes storms are **simply allowed by the Lord!** Storms come from different sources, but they do all serve a purpose!

One dark night the disciples of Jesus were caught in a real troubling storm. The story is recorded in **Matthew 14:22-33.**

Straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, & to go before Him unto the other side, while He sent the multitudes away. And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up into a mountain apart to pray: & when the evening was come, He was there alone. But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary. And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; & they cried out for fear. But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid. And Peter answered Him & said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. And He said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; & beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth His hand, & caught him, & said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt? And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased. Then they that were in the ship came & worshipped Him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God.

The Sea of Galilee is **notorious** for its sudden severe storms! Not only was it stormy, but night had fallen! And the disciples were in the midst of the sea, & last, but not least, the wind was contrary! **O how rich this story is in symbolism!**

They were terrified! Often **we** are afraid when we walk by sight, rather than by faith; when we get our eyes on our circumstances, rather than on God; when we act in disobedience, rather than in obedience!

But notice that **even obedience can put you in a storm!** It was **Jesus** who had commanded them to get into the boat! They were doing exactly what Jesus told them to do! They were where God wanted them to be, performing the very act God wanted them to perform! And while they were being **obedient**, the Bible says, **a storm arose!**

Whenever we face difficulties in life our natural tendency is to try to figure out what has **caused** the storm! **We wonder why we are being hit!** But the storms of life don't necessarily come as a result of **disobedience**; storms may come as a **result** of our **obedience!** There are so **many lessons** for us in this passage! Let's look at just a **few** of the lessons we can learn in this story: --

1. The Lord Will Meet You In Your Storm! -- vr. 25.

Jesus had been up in the mountain praying, but when He saw the disciples in the storm, at about 3:00 in the

morning, Jesus came to them, walking on the water. **Jesus comes to them & He comes to us!**

He may come to you in unexpected ways, but He **will** come! **Jesus always stands above the storm!** Jesus is always near when we are in trouble; & He is there in plenty of time to help us! God does not leave us alone in the storm; **He comes to us! Divine deliverance will come at the most crucial hour!**

The disciples did not recognize Jesus at first, thinking it was a ghost! My friends, **don't ever get so focused on your storm that you lose sight of the Lord!** Some of us get so caught up in the storm, that we do not recognize the Lord's presence! We do not hear the Lord trying to talk with us & comfort us!

Jesus said to them: "Take courage; **it is I**; Don't be afraid!" When Jesus says, "**It is I**" that is the most comforting phrase there is! Literally it means: "**It is I AM**" the very same phrase God gave to Moses at the burning bush! **Jesus is still the all-sufficient Almighty God!**

Right now **you** may be going through great affliction! The clouds have already gathered; the waves seem higher & more devastating than you have ever before experienced. Caught in the swirling waters of trouble, physical weakness, family problems, personal failure, battles at work, or at home, you see no possibility of surviving the storm! **Open your spiritual eyes!** & recognize the Lord's presence! **Open your spiritual ears!** & hear Him say: "Be of good cheer; It is the great I Am; don't be afraid!" He is saying to you today: "It's all right; I am here! Don't be afraid."

One day Missionary David Livingstone stood before the students of Glasgow University. He had spent many long years in the heart of Africa as a medical missionary, at a time when conditions were much more trying than they are even today. It was the occasion of the commencement exercises, & Livingstone asked, "Shall I tell you what sustained me in my exiled life among strangers whose language & whose ways I did not understand?" A hush swept over the student audience as they listened carefully. "It was this, 'Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.'" My friends, when your boat is rocked by the waves, & the night grows dark, if you will listen, you can hear Christ saying to you, "It's all right; I Am here! Don't be afraid."

2. The Lord Will Show You Who You Are In The Storm!

In verse 30 we learn that as Peter looked around at the high waves he was terrified, & cried out: "**Lord, save me!**" "Lord, save me!" Those three little words spoken by Peter make up one of the shortest prayers recorded in the Bible. He cried out: "Lord, save me!" & we are told that **immediately** (notice that word in verse 31, "**immediately**") Jesus reached out his hand & caught Peter!

No matter who you are, how great your need, or how deeply you may have fallen, in the very moment you cry out, "Lord, save me!" **He will do so!** The Bible still says: "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

My friends, **the storms of life always reveal our true character!** How you respond, & how you react to the storms of life, tell us a lot about who you are, & what you are made of! The contrary winds are hard to face; **yet when accepted in the right spirit, they develop our character!**

Peter began to sink because of **fear!** He became preoccupied with his perilous circumstances, the howling wind, the turbulent waves! Fear gripped his heart & Peter began to sink! Peter had taken his eyes **off** God & he was focused on his own circumstances.

In the storm, do you throw your faith to the winds? do you doubt God's ability to deliver you? do you become

discouraged? do you get angry & mad? do you become bitter? **OR**, have you learned to trust in the Lord in times of trial & testing, believing He will see you through? **What is your attitude, your response to the storm?**

We act so self sufficient when things are going our way, but God wants us to trust in Him in **good times & in bad times!** The storm should help us to focus our attention on God! Learn to trust God fully & completely! Remember that **Romans 8:28 is still in the Bible!** Lift your eyes above the present condition which are so distressing, & remember that God is on your side!

When one of America's great navel vessels (Wasp) in World War II caught fire & began to sink, the sailors were ordered to abandon ship & swim **away** from the vessel immediately. They jumped overboard but instead of trusting their well-tested life jackets for safety, many of them clung to the sides of the ship. When the vessel plunged beneath the surface, the sailors were sucked down with it! We as Christians often make similar blunders. **Are you reluctant to trust God fully & to let God take complete charge of your life?**

3. The Lord Will Show You Who He Is In The Storm!

Jesus was teaching these disciples something very important here! He had just fed the 5000, & they still had not understood that He was "the Son of God." So Jesus sent them into a storm; & He came walking on the waters; He quieted the storm, & **finally** they say: "You really **are** the Son of God!" Verse 33 reads, "Then those who were in the boat worshipped Him, saying, 'Truly you are the Son of God.'"

What is God trying to teach you? Jesus permits us to try our strength that we may learn our own weakness, & when we find that our strength is not sufficient, **then we are able to discover the greatness of His power!** When you go through the storms of life, God gives you a greater picture, a greater understanding, **of Who He is!** I hear people saying, "It was a God thing!" & often that is true! The song says it so well: "**If I never had a problem, I wouldn't know that God could solve them!**"

When Jesus quieted the storm, **they worshipped Him!** They did more than just **praise** Him; they **worshipped** Him. **Praise** is when you tell **others** who God is! **Worship** is when you tell **God** Who He is! They said: "Truly you are the Son of God!" It is through the storm that you see Him not for what He **does, but for Who He is!**

No matter what happens, lets keep our eyes on Jesus! We will discover Jesus is completely **reliable!** We need never be afraid to trust Him fully. **God does not have to stop the storm! He can come in the midst of the storm & walk you through your storm.**

May I take a page out of my own personal life? The greatest storm I ever faced was when I experienced an emotional break down some years ago now, back in 1992. God could have prevented that event in my life; but He did not! However, God taught me lessons I could never have learned other-wise; **& most of all, He showed me He is still God!** The same God who gives you directions that leads you into the storm, is the same God who meets you in your storm! He is the same God who will walk you through your storm, & He is the same God who will deliver you out of your storm! **If you know Who He is -- then you'll know what He can do!**

Conclusion: Some of you may be doubting God's love for you today! You doubt that God really cares about you. You doubt that God is looking out for you. You doubt God has your best interest at heart. You doubt that God knows what He's doing.

Jesus Christ is no security **against** the storm, but He is perfect security **in** the storms! He has never promised you an easy passage; only a safe landing! Sometimes He calms the storm; other times He calms His child! But understand this: when God does not solve your problem, He will show up in the middle of it, & cause you to come

out with your faith **fortified!**

No matter what happen, let's keep our eyes on Jesus! The Lord will **meet you** in your storm! The Lord will show you who **you are** in the storm! The Lord will show you who **He is** in the storm! His power to deliver us, either **from** the storm, or **in** the storm, always surpasses any other power to harm or destroy us! **O, what peace we often forfeit when we refuse to take God at His word!** How much better it is to keep our eyes on Him, & trust His promises!

If the darkness of the night, & the fury of the storms, & the contrary winds are upon you, & you are beginning to sink into despair & doubt, **may your cry be, "Lord save me!" & He will!**

A passenger boat was en route from Buffalo, NY to Cleveland, OH, when a terrible storm arose. Actually fearing that the ship would sink, everyone gathered to pray, except an elderly woman, who seemed quite unconcerned as she sat calmly **praising the Lord!** After the danger was over, some of the people asked the reason for her peacefulness in the face of impending death. "Well, dear friends," she replied, "it's like this. I have two daughters. One has gone to be with the Lord, & the other is living in Cleveland. When our lives were threatened, I honestly wondered which daughter I would meet first, the one in Cleveland or the one in Heaven. **I would have rejoiced to see either!**" Your faith, like her faith, can rest with childlike simplicity, in the wisdom of your Heavenly Father!

Rev. Lyle W. Pettit -- Calvary Baptist Church -- Benson, AZ
October 5, 2014 -- Sunday Morning