

God's Way in the Storms of Life

Retired
Members
Corner



*"The Lord has His way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of His feet".
(Nahum 1:3)*

Life down here is seldom without some stormy passages and in Ps.107, the Psalmist reviews five different storm-tested groups (Wanderers, Enslaved, Sin-sick, Storm-tossed and the Hungry & Thirsty,) where people get into difficulties and cry out to the Lord for deliverance, and each time he exhorts us: *"Oh, that men would give thanks to the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men!"* And finally concludes: *"Whoever is wise and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving kindness of the Lord."*

So let us focus now on the Storm-tossed and consider some of the storms of life that can affect us and what we can learn from scripture of their causes and cures. (I acknowledge some help here from Warren Wiersbe.) Let us look at three possible causes of storms, and then the greatest storm of all, faced by the Son of God Himself for us at Calvary.

1) Storms caused by others

a) Joseph

Joseph encountered the storms of the favouritism of his father which led to the jealousy, envy and injustice of his brothers and to slavery in Egypt. His faith in God's promise was severely tested over some 13 years, yet God had a plan and a time for his deliverance and gave victory over temptation and the working of all things for the ultimate good of Joseph, his family and God's strategy for world redemption and God's glory.

b) David

David encountered the storms of Saul's jealousy, treachery and murderous relationship over a protracted period, with few he could trust except God and Jonathan, yet never yielded to the temptation to take things into his own hands.

David knew He was to be God's chosen replacement for the disobedient and God-forsaken king Saul, yet he had to endure those 8 years on the run and the constant threat of death until God's plan worked out and God's time came for Divine deliverance and the fulfilment of His purposes.

c) Paul shipwrecked

Paul, in Acts 27, on his God-appointed journey towards Rome where he was destined to testify before Caesar, yet suffered shipwreck, despite having warned the centurion and ship-master from God that disaster lay ahead if they ignored the heavenly warning. Nevertheless, the God to whom he belonged, and whom he served, preserved the feet of His saint and gave him all those who sailed with him and was further glorified in his ministry of deliverance and healing on the island. Again, God's plan and God's time were fulfilled.

2. Storms due to God's Testing

a) Abraham at Mt. Moriah

When Abraham was tested by God to surrender the "Dearest idol he had known", indeed the very means of the fulfilment of God's original promise, he magnificently chose not to "lean to his own understanding" but to trust the God who had become his Friend, even when it didn't seem to make sense.

He had set out with this God, not knowing where he was going, but only with Whom. And now he was believing Him for a resurrection if necessary, for he, like the later Apostle, knew in Whom he had believed and was persuaded that what He had promised, He was able also to perform, and returned with Laughter (Isaac) and with praise for the God Who provides. And he grew in his understanding of the loving kindness of the Lord, His plan and His time.

b) Job

Job seemingly knew nothing of the duel in the heavens between God and Satan, using Job as their battleground, yet I believe God knew He had done such a work of grace in Job's heart that it could withstand the hellish onslaught of the catastrophic loss of 11,500 animals, umpteen servants and 10 children; the respect of his wife and servants and friends; and the loss of his own health. What a storm! Yet it ended in surrender, worship and fruitfulness, and no hard feelings against God!

Job too came to understand the loving kindness of his Lord, His plan and His time.

c) The Disciples on the lake (Matt. 14)

Sent out by the Master Himself yet engulfed in a storm through no fault of their own. I'm sure there were some shouts of 'Why did He send us here without Himself?'

In a sudden storm, without the Master's conscious presence, a strong wind against them, daylight fading fast, up to 10 hours of struggle against wind and wave, strength failing, then horror of horrors, a ghost! But mercifully it was the Master at last, in a most unexpected turn of events. Then He quells their fears with his words, "Be of good cheer, it is I, be not afraid." Oh, how reassuring to hear His voice. "The words I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life" and so it is when our souls are in turmoil, a word from the Master to our own hearts calms the storm and creates trust in Him, His plans and His timing.

3. Storms due to our own Disobedience

a) King Saul

Saul had started out so well; chosen by God, anointed with His Spirit, approved by the people.

Yet he failed the test of obedience to do things God's way, yielded to people pressure and was ultimately rejected as God's king, forsaken by His Spirit and became a bitter, fearful, jealous, scheming man who resisted the plan of God and died a tragic suicide. Oh, how I need to die to my own ambitions and let God do things His perfect way so that His will is done, His kingdom comes and His is the Glory!

b) Jonah

I have to confess I have a bit of sympathy with Jonah who was called by God to go and preach to the wicked and cruel Assyrians who had abused and murdered many of Jonah's own nation, perhaps even some of his own friends or family. A people who deserved God's judgement were to be given a chance to repent and be saved?! And so he tried to hide from God and got into a life-threatening storm that threatened to take not only his own life but also the lives of all who sailed with him.

But how the rest of the story magnifies the mercy of God. Mercy on the sailors who ended up trusting in Jehovah, mercy on the Assyrians, that wicked and murderous people, and even mercy on Jonah himself who had so resisted the plan of God, and could not accept God's grace to the undeserving, including himself! Did Jonah ultimately come to "understand the loving kindness of the Lord"? Do I?

c) Peter

Then there's Peter who seems so like us at times.

He couldn't see his own weakness even when Jesus warned him and he fell into a storm of humiliation and fear in the High Priest's palace yard and

denied three times the Lord whom he loved, and ended up heart-broken over his own weakness, failure and sin. And then found that His master had died and that he had no way of making amends with Him. Yet we know that the Lord had His way in that whirlwind and storm too and lovingly sought out His failed disciple, restored and recommissioned him at that wonderful lakeshore resurrection rendezvous. And we have the records of Acts, two epistles and a historical record to show how Peter became a fearless preacher and wise pastor as the Master made it all work for good and the glory of God.

4. The greatest Storm of all – Calvary

Satan stirred up sinful men to falsely accuse, illegally try and cruelly execute the Son of God who had come to seek and to save them from eternal loss.

The sun went black, as God hid His face and poured out His wrath on His own Son as He willingly took on the sin of the world, including my sins and my sinfulness.

The earth convulsed in an earthquake that opened graves and tore the thick 60-foot-high Temple veil from top to bottom.

Satan thought he had won the day and destroyed the Saviour of the world and thus all our hopes of salvation.

BUT, the greatest tragedy became the greatest triumph when, three days later, Jesus arose, conquering sin, death and Hell, and opening the Kingdom of Heaven to all believers.

And so Jesus bids us come unto Him, receive the fruits of what He has achieved and be set free from the slavery of sin, receive the gift of His Spirit and become His dwelling place in this world and a channel of His blessing.