

Lessons from the Storm

By: David Burruss

As preachers, we often teach lessons about the storms of life. I know I have preached about the disciples on the Sea of Galilee, about trusting God in difficult circumstances, and about remembering that the Lord is with us even when life feels overwhelming. Those lessons are true, but sometimes a familiar passage becomes much more personal when we find ourselves in a storm of our own.

Recently, I have been going through a challenging and stressful time with my secular job. The situation weighed heavily on me, and I found myself constantly thinking about what I could do to fix it. I was trying to anticipate what might happen, work through every possibility, and somehow control the outcome. The more I tried to carry the situation myself, the heavier it became. The stress began affecting me in other ways too. I found myself eating more, and over time I began gaining weight. What was happening inwardly was beginning to show outwardly.

About a week and a half ago, while driving to the office, I prayed to God about everything that was happening. I asked Him what He was trying to show me through this situation and how He could use me in it. As I prayed, I began to realize something I had not fully admitted to myself. I had been trying to depend on me.

I believed in God. I was praying to God. I knew what Scripture says about trusting Him. Yet at the same time, I was still carrying the situation as though everything depended on my ability to solve it. That realization brought Proverbs 3:5-6 to mind: "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths."

The contrast is clear. We are to trust in the Lord and not lean on our own understanding. That does not mean we stop thinking, planning, or acting responsibly. God expects us to use wisdom and fulfill the duties before us. But there is a difference between doing what we can and believing that everything depends on us. Looking back, I had crossed that line without realizing it.

The account of Jesus calming the storm also took on deeper meaning for me. Mark tells us that "a great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that it was already filling" (Mark 4:37). The danger was real. The disciples were frightened, and they woke Jesus saying, "Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?" (Mark 4:38).

Jesus rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Peace, be still!" The wind ceased, and there was a great calm. Then He asked them, "Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?" (Mark 4:39-40).

We often focus on the fact that Jesus calmed the storm, and rightly so. But the storm also revealed something about the disciples. It exposed their fear and showed where their confidence was lacking. They were in the boat with Jesus, yet the storm revealed that they had not fully grasped what His presence meant.

That made me think differently about my own situation. I had been asking God to change the storm around me, but perhaps I also needed to pay attention to what the storm was revealing within me. Sometimes difficult circumstances expose fears, habits, and misplaced confidence that remain hidden when life is comfortable.

Peter writes, "casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you" (1 Peter 5:7). That verse does not tell us to pretend our concerns are unimportant. It tells us where to put them. We are to cast them upon God because He cares for us. I had been praying, but in many ways I was still holding on to the burden.

Paul gives similar instruction in Philippians 4:6-7: "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God." He then says that the peace of God "will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

Notice that Paul does not promise that every difficult circumstance will immediately disappear. He promises that God's peace can guard our hearts and minds while we walk through it. That distinction matters. Faith does not mean we stop working or making responsible decisions. It means we stop living as though the entire outcome depends upon us.

Jesus also said, "Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things" (Matthew 6:34). Those words helped change my perspective. God had not asked me to solve tomorrow before it arrived. He had asked me to trust Him, seek what is right, fulfill the responsibilities before me, and leave what I could not control in His hands.

My circumstances did not immediately change, but my mindset began to. Instead of only asking, "How am I going to fix this?" I began asking, "How can I honor God in this?" Instead of focusing only on getting out of the situation, I began thinking about how God could use me while I was in it.

Then, in His providence, the answer I had been praying for came. My job was saved.

I am deeply thankful for that answer to prayer, but I do not want to miss what God's Word was teaching me before the outcome became clear. The lesson was not that if I trusted correctly, God was obligated to preserve my job. Scripture never promises that. Faith is not a formula for getting the result we want. The greater lesson was that God was worthy of my trust before I knew how the situation would end.

Perhaps that is one of the blessings that can come from the storms of life. We naturally pray for calm, and there is nothing wrong with asking God to change difficult circumstances. But while we ask Him to calm the storm around us, we should also allow His Word to show us what the storm is revealing within us.

I am thankful that God answered my prayer concerning my job. I am also thankful that before I knew the answer, His Word reminded me where my confidence needed to be. Sometimes we ask God to change our circumstances, and He does. But even before the circumstances change, He may be using them to teach us to trust Him more completely.