

2. OVERCOMING THE STORMS OF LIFE

Not every bad thing that happens to us should be passively accepted. We are going to look at three types of spiritual storms that blow into our lives and how we should respond in each case.

Natural storms come frequently. Some days you get a cold southerly, and some days you get rain or sun. We just accept that is part of life. Storms come. In some parts of the world hurricanes and cyclones are frequent and people living there get good at predicting when a storm is coming. Well it is the same with spiritual storms and I believe that these are becoming more frequent and more intense today.

What's a spiritual storm?

Conditions, situations and experiences that place us under such physical, emotional and / or spiritual pressure that we find it hard to function.

This obviously doesn't happen all the time, but there are times in our lives when something blows into our life with such intensity that we find it hard to function.

THREE TYPES OF STORM

Storms to be **resisted** – a time to FIGHT

Storms to **seek shelter from** – a time to HIDE

Storms to **endure** – a time to STAND

I believe that God allows every storm that sweeps into our lives whether the source is Satan, people, circumstances, or God himself who may send it directly to test us. The Lord allows the storms to accomplish certain things in our lives. So, if we learn to recognise the type of storm we can respond appropriately and benefit from it.

STORMS TO RESIST (a time to FIGHT)

One day Jesus said to his disciples, "Let's cross over to the other side of the lake." So they got into a boat and started out. On the way

across, Jesus lay down for a nap, and while he was sleeping the wind began to rise. A fierce storm developed that threatened to swamp them, and they were in real danger.

The disciples woke him up, shouting, "Master, Master, we're going to drown!"

So Jesus rebuked the wind and the raging waves. The storm stopped and all was calm! Then he asked them, "Where is your faith?"

And they were filled with awe and amazement. They said to one another, "Who is this man, that even the winds and waves obey him?"

Luke 8:22-25

Jesus walked intimately with His Father and if Father God had sent that storm Jesus would not have rebuked it. He knew it was demonic in origin. The devil thought if he can drown this bunch he'd remove the threat. Jesus rebukes the storm and then He says, "*Where is your faith?*" Every time a storm blows into our lives the Holy Spirit is asking that question – "*Where is your faith?*"

Demonic storms can be things like sudden overpowering temptations. We are human and susceptible to temptations to sin every day and that is just the normal part of battling the fallen nature and allowing the Christ nature to grow within us. But, sudden overpowering temptations may be demonic and have to be resisted. Or sometimes there are demonic attacks upon our minds and emotions so that a small pain or niggle in our body somewhere is inflamed into "I wonder if that is a serious illness."

Those things have to be resisted. I had cancer as a young man and it had to be resisted. The disease was defeated and God saw me through and I have been clear for more than thirty years. We have just lost a good friend to cancer. We stood with her, prayed, the elders anointed her with oil and over many months she had regular soaking prayer. It seemed that for a while she improved; then the disease took her and now she's with the Lord.

Was it right to

When David sinned with Bathsheba and she had a child, God said He was going to take that child. David fasted

fight? Yes.

and prayed that God would heal the boy.

And when the Lord took the child David got up and washed. His advisers asked what he was doing. He said while there was life there was a chance he could touch God and see that child healed. But, when death came he accepted it. Sometimes we lose those battles with loved ones but it is right to resist.

My late wife Jane suffered from migraines about every six weeks which caused nausea and intense pain. They confined her to bed and she couldn't move because the pain was so great. I became angry. Something in me was provoked. I went to the next room and cried out to heaven and rebuked the disease. Then I went into the bedroom, but there was no change. I went and prayed again for a few minutes and then went in again – no change. This went on for about five or six times and the sixth time of rebuking this thing I went into the bedroom and asked, "How are you?" Jane replied, "It's gone!" She never had another one again. The Bible says "Submit yourself therefore to God, resist the Devil and he will flee from you".

STORMS TO SEEK SHELTER FROM (a time to HIDE)

The LORD himself will fight for you. You won't have to lift a finger in your defence! Exodus 14:14

Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy!

I look to you for protection.

*I will hide beneath the shadow of your wings
until this violent storm is past.*

Psalm 57:1

As Christians, our tendency is that when something hits us we rebuke it straight away. It's like an innate reaction. That's a good reaction to have; we ought to have fight in us. Be passionate. But, sometimes you resist and nothing will happen and it's a storm to seek shelter from. It is a time to be still. God requires you to stop fighting. Stop running to and fro. Calm down, be still. Enjoy intimacy with God.

Feel His arm around you saying, *“It’s okay, I’m going to walk you through this and deal with it.”* Be still and know that He is God.

What are some examples? Conditions in society that are rocking things. It could be economic conditions, the decay of morals that breaks up families or it could be the death of loved one. You can’t resist that, it happened and it is time to hide in God’s protective care. Terrorism is an example of a storm that has hit the world driven and fanned by a demonic spirit. There is an element there that has to be resisted, but there are things happening in the world that are going to affect us. We didn’t cause them. The only thing you can do is know that the Lord will fight for you; the Lord will protect you, be still, be still and know that He is God.

THE STORM TO ENDURE (a time to STAND)

The next day, as gale-force winds continued to batter the ship, the crew began throwing the cargo overboard. The following day they even threw out the ship's equipment and anything else they could lay their hands on. The terrible storm raged unabated for many days, blotting out the sun and the stars, until at last all hope was gone. No one had eaten for a long time. Finally, Paul called the crew together and said, "Men, you should have listened to me in the first place and not left Fair Havens. You would have avoided all this injury and loss. But take courage! None of you will lose your lives, even though the ship will go down. For last night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve stood beside me, and he said, 'Don't be afraid, Paul, for you will surely stand trial before Caesar! What's more, God in his goodness has granted safety to everyone sailing with you.' So take courage! For I believe God. It will be just as he said.

Acts 27:18-25

I believe that the apostle Paul would have heard about Jesus rebuking the storm on the Sea of Galilee. I am sure that Paul, being a fighter, would have tried to rebuke the storm. He would have and obviously nothing happened. In the midst of such a storm it is hard to hide in God and be peaceful. So it’s a third type of storm and the only thing you can do in a storm like that is to go through it and endure it.

However long it lasts you have to endure. The amazing thing is God sent an angel to stand next to Paul and say it will be all right. And so Paul says take courage I believe it will turn out exactly as God has said.

When you are in a storm you have to endure. That is the only thing you can do. The amazing thing is God sent an angel to stand next to Paul and say that God had sent him with good news: the ship will go down but all will be saved. Good news? Men and angels see things very differently! From a human point of view the calming of the storm would have been good news. But from God's point of view, enduring the storm and coming out the other side was of greater value. And so Paul says to the ship, *“Take courage it will turn out exactly as God has said.”* These guys were in a boat for two weeks! They would have been desperate. And some of you have been in a storm not merely an hour, but weeks and months and years and decades because there are things in your life that have blown in and caused heartache.

Take courage because it will turn out exactly as God has said.

**Storms to resist teach us spiritual warfare
Storms to seek shelter from teach us to trust God
Storms to endure change our character**

Great character can be developed in those third sorts of storms. It is a mistake to think that Christian maturity means winning every battle. Failure, disappointment and adversity are all storms we must endure and over time God will work them for good as we endure in faith.

*Do not gloat over me, my enemy!
Though I have fallen, I will rise.
Though I sit in darkness,
the LORD will be my light*

Micah 7:8

When you are in a storm to endure it looks like the devil has won. It looks like sickness has won. It looks like cancer has won. It looks like financial reversal has won. It looks like that strain in your

relationship has won. Take courage, it will turn out exactly as God has intended.

Some circumstances may be a combination of all three storms and after resisting the enemy, and entrusting ourselves to God, we may need to endure until the answer comes and the storm passes. If we trust Him God will use each storm to mature and equip us.

