

LESSONS FROM THE STORM

By

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Unless otherwise stated, all scripture quotations in this booklet are taken from the New King James Version of the Bible.

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Scripture Reading: Mark 6 vs 45-50

[Verse 45] “Immediately Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side while He sent the multitudes away. And when He sent the multitudes away He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. Now when evening came He was alone there but the boat was in the middle of the sea tossed by the waves for the wind was contrary”.

Anybody ever heard of the book or the prophet Nahum. If you would like to try and search that book, it is only a small book tucked away in the Old Testament. The word of the Lord came to Nahum and this is what Nahum wrote in chapter 1 vs 3 “The way of the Lord is in the whirlwind. In other words, God has a word for you in your storm. The way of the Lord is in the cyclone or the whirlwind or the storm. He displays His power in the whirlwind or in the storm. It is good to know He is still in control no matter what storm you come into.

Say these after me this morning:

- He brought me here
- He is praying for me
- He will come to my rescue
- He will see me through my storm

You need to catch that this morning. If you start at verse 1 of our chapter it is an amazing chapter because it begins with **persecution**. It begins with the death of John the Baptist. Christ’s servants will suffer and some will even die for Him. It happens and it is happening today. Every three minutes someone is martyred for Jesus Christ.

Then we see Him **getting away out of the road**, taking the disciples with Him. He is withdrawing and yet because of a wonderful, personality and attractiveness in His life people run after Him. They just linger round Him and they hunger after Him. Then after He ministers to them, they are all hungry. He asks the disciples to give them something to eat and that is where we have the miracle of the loaves and the fishes. So we see persecution. Christ’s servants will suffer and some will even die. John the Baptist was beheaded.

Then we see His **provision**. Christ’s servants will minister the bread of life to others. Finally we see Him in the midst of the storm. After the multitudes wanted to get Him because He fed them miraculously so they thought “this guy is special”. They wanted to take Him and make Him king. So He took Himself away again and He put the disciples into a boat and sent them over to the other side. He went away up to the mountains to pray and yet in the midst of it all we see His **preservation** of those. He is thinking about those because the multitude, if they took Him and made Him king then that would be dangerous for the disciples too.

Sometimes success can be your downfall. The peril of success. Sadly some men and women of God, when God has used them in a mighty way it has elevated them and not exalted Christ. Sadly it has been their ruination.

Christ’s prayers will rescue and deliver His servants. He sends them into the boat and as they are going across they hit the storm. Yet in the middle of the storm here He is. In John 6 vs 15 when Jesus had performed a miracle with the loaves and the fishes to feed the 5000 men besides women and children, the desire of the crowd was to make Him king. But Jesus rather than demanding or looking or milking the lime light He withdrew Himself and He

commanded His disciples and He dismissed the crowd. I love Christ's humility. I love the humility of Jesus. Let this mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus our Lord. That is what Paul said. I see His decisiveness in protecting His disciples. He knew what the crowd wanted but He also knew in His heart what His Father wanted. The crowd wanted Him to wear a crown, His Father had destined Him to hang on a cross.

“Immediately Jesus made the disciples into the boat”. This tells me the Lord Jesus was so anxious to get His disciples into the boat and dismiss the crowds for after the miracle of the loaves and fishes the people wanted to make Him king. People will follow anyone who offers them material things. You go to Romania and open a church and it will be filled as long as you give them a food parcel. Now you need the food parcel to minister the word, or do you? The word of God is the bread of life. You go to certain parts of the earth and they will come for what you can give. That is what happened to Jesus, they came for what they could get and then they left Him. They didn't want discipleship. People will follow anyone who offers them material things but Jesus will not have bread and butter disciples. He does not want “name it and claim it” followers. The Lord Jesus could have named and claimed salvation without a cross but as Nahum said “the way of the Lord is in the whirlwind and in the storm”.

He allows us the experience of the storm to teach us faith, trust and obedience. This was not a Jonah storm. There are two types of storm. There is the Jonah storm that wherever you go, you cause havoc and create a storm. That is not the Jonah storm. The Jonah storm came from disobedience and rebellion. They got into the boat, they obeyed His call, they went in the will of God and the will of God was that they go into a storm. How do you explain that? We are forever blaming the devil and blaming this or blaming that. The Lord says “hold on that is part of my will for your life, what are you moaning about? Learn from this experience”.

This storm came from obeying the command of Jesus. This storm was in the will of God for their lives. They entered it by obeying the command of Jesus. It wasn't the devil. It wasn't their disobedience. It was out of devotion that they obeyed their Master. It was out of dedication because they were dedicated to His cause. Out of determination they said “yes we are going to answer the call”. By answering the call, they entered the storm. This is not a red carpet treatment from here to heaven. There is a storm and you are going to be in one if not already. Then He directed His disciples to get into the boat to go before Him. “Immediately Jesus made His disciples get into the boat”. Notice immediately and directed. Immediately He sensed there was a problem. Then He directed, He gave an order. You need to get close to Him, to know His voice and to answer His call. So the disciples heard His word and obeyed His command. “After He had dismissed the multitudes He went up into the hills by himself to pray”. When it was evening, He was still there alone. He was on the mountain but by this time the boat was out on the sea, “many furlongs distance from the land, beaten and tossed by the waves for the wind was against them”.

Here is a beautiful picture of Jesus and His church today. Jesus is on the mountain praying while His disciples are bottling the storm on the lake. Jesus is praying, He is interceding in heaven for us this morning. He stands at the throne of grace while we face the storms of our lives on earth. His coming seems a long way off but He is on His way and He will come and we will meet Him when we need Him most.

[Verse 48] “And in the fourth watch of the night (3.00-6.00 a.m. in the morning) Jesus came to them walking on the sea”. What to them was a problem became a pathway for Him to their rescue. Whatever your storm is, it becomes His pathway. Don't think He can't. He was walking on the water to meet them. He walked on their problem to get to them and He did it between 3.00 and 6.00 a.m. in the morning, the darkest hour of the night. Your darkest hour is just before the dawn. Jesus came to them, they couldn't get to Him so He came to

them. There are times whenever we feel we can't get to Him. All we do is cry out for mercy "Lord don't let us perish". Before you know it, He is there.

I don't know where you are, I don't know what you are going through, I don't know how your marriage is, I don't know how your relationships are, I don't know what your situation financially is or with regards to your vocation in life. I don't even know where you are in God this morning, that is between you and God. But if you are in a storm this morning wait on Him because He is coming. He promised he would come and He will.

I will never forget many a night leaving Falkirk after taking a meeting and we always had to leave at 9.00 p.m. at night to head for Stranraer returning home to Belfast. What started as a slight breeze in Falkirk and a little drizzle, by the time you hit the Ayrshire coast it was a galeforce wind, it was blustery, rain, hail, snow. I had to drive with my face pushed against the windscreen to try and see where I was going and to drive as fast as I was allowed. Not to mention, the fog was thick. Just to catch the last ferry and it wasn't the new HSS the new modern boat it was the old conventional thing. If you think the driving sounds hazardous, the crossing was petrifying. Ever been on a boat in a storm? Up the loch you could feel the boat beginning to rock from side to side. But in the open sea away from the mountains, the currents meeting, the thing was like a cork hugging the top of the water. No-one walked around on the boat, not even the staff. The amazing thing is they gave free vouchers out for a meal. I was the only person in the cafeteria eating curry. I said "if I am going to be sick, I will be sick well and good". Everybody lay on the floor. The laughter and the jokes up the loch suddenly stopped and a deafening silence filled the boat. All that could be heard was a broken toilet door clanging and cutlery going from one end of the kitchen to the other and empty bins rattling and dare I say it, the banging of the hull of the vessel. As it hit one wave you just waited with baited breath until the boat came down again and then it would hit another one. Anybody been on that ferry? It is the worst crossing in the world.

If the middle part of the crossing was petrifying the docking was terrifying. Trying to secure the boat to the dock was like trying to put a rope round a raging bull. In the midst of it all, more prayers were prayed on that boat by this man. It is amazing how you get a prayer life. It is amazing how your prayer life develops and really increases. It makes you mature within half an hour. More prayers were prayed, more sins were confessed, more promises were made, more vows were uttered, more bible verses were quoted, more futures were surrendered during those storm tossed moments. When on dry ground I asked myself the question "why on earth am I doing this?" The answer comes back "because I have to go to the other side to obey the call of God". There is a man needed for Falkirk and that pulled me across the Irish sea and back again over the waves, on the boat, sea sick, backwards, forwards, sideways, everywhere, have you been there? All to obey the call of God. Are you willing to do that?

He brought me here. Can you say it with me? He is praying for me? He will come to my rescue, He will see me through my storm. "Immediately Jesus made the disciples enter the boat and go to the other side. In the middle of the lake, they were in a storm but **He brought them into it. He allowed them to experience a storm.** He directed them into it, He directed me here. You are not here by chance. He went up on the mountain to pray but the boat was in the middle of the sea tossed because the wind was contrary and boisterous but He was praying for me. He was praying for the disciples. He brought me here. That is what they needed to say to themselves. We are in this, we are obeying His word. We are in this because we honoured Him. We are in this because we obeyed, we listened, we heard, we received and we responded to the command. Now look where we are. Yet on the mountain, He could see them and He was praying for them. He is praying for you, whatever your storm is, in the middle of your storm. While we are struggling against the storm Jesus prays for us.

[Verse 25] "Now in the fourth watch Jesus went to them". He came to them in their hour of need. He will come to me, He will come to my rescue.

Often we feel alone. Even in a marriage you can feel alone. Even in a home you can feel alone. In a church of hundreds of people you can feel alone. Often we feel alone, on our own, deserted, forsaken, forgotten, undermined, overlooked, yet somehow at some point we know that He will come. Don't ask me how, but He will come. We wish and pray and we plead that He would hurry up. Please come quickly, Lord I am waiting on you but would you hurry up. At the last minute when we think we can take no more and in the nick of time when we are about to perish and go under He comes walking on the very thing that has taken us under. He will rescue me. He will lift me up. He will bring me back.

If you read verses 26-32 we have got the incident of Peter. They thought it was a ghost. Christians sometimes when they are filled with fear, they see stupid things. Sometimes Christians can become paranoid. It is imagination instead of revelation. You need to know the difference between revelation and imagination. They thought it was a ghost. Why? Because they were filled with fear and not faith. When you are filled with faith you see how God sees. You see God in everything. You see His fingerprint. You see His plans being fulfilled in your life. Peter being Peter was willing to have a go, obey the word and step out in faith. Jesus called Him out of his comfort zone. We can call Peter what we like but he was willing to step out of his comfort zone. There are people stuck in churches all over this land they are dead but they are comfortable. They don't want to get out because there is too much change required. There are people who want to come to this church but they don't want to leave their own because their security even in nothingness - nothing expected and nothing required. It is easy to sit in nothingness and become comfortable. When you step out of the boat you are stepping out in faith. For a moment, Peter, when he had his eyes on Jesus was able to walk on his problem too. Until he saw everything else but Jesus. If you are looking at your circumstances. If you are looking at your surroundings, you are going down. As soon as he saw the wind was boisterous and the sea, he began to sink then he cried out "Lord save me".

Peter walked on the water to go to Jesus. No he walked on the word because Jesus said "come". Peter obeyed the word. When you obey the word it is amazing what you can walk on. You can walk on every problem that comes your way. You can walk on top of every storm. That is for me to say it and for you to prove it. I have proved it on many occasions in my life. I have sat in a hospital waiting room with Linda almost ready to die and said "Lord I don't understand this but her life is in your hands". She made a remarkable recovery.

We stood in the SCBU in Falkirk and we said "Lord we don't know why. We have waited 9 years for a boy, now he is born and they are taking him away from us. He could have leukaemia, he could have blood problems, he could have cancer, brain damage etc. Lord we don't know what is going on but our lives are in your hand and if there is anything wrong with him we will still love our son". Look at him today, perfectly whole.

When we thought there was no way, all we could do was say "Lord save us, rescue us, we feel as if we are going under. We don't want to go under but it feels like we are going under". You say "Lord" and right away the hand is there [Isa. 41 v 10] "fear not for I am with you. Be not dismayed for I am your God. I will help you, I will strengthen you, I will uphold you with the right hand of my righteousness". There is a strong hand for you. At the end of your call is the hand of Christ. He walked and Jesus brought him back into the boat. Jesus caught him and brought him back into the ship. Have you been out of the ship and sinking? Let Him bring you back into the ship. Fellowship. Sometimes you can get out of sorts in your Christian life and you can feel out of the ship. There are people and when they want to leave one church to go to another they say "I feel out of it". Well whose fault is that? Is that

the fault of the people? Is that our fault? I don't feel out of it, I feel I want to be in the centre of it all.

Jesus brought him back into the ship, the fellowship. Is that where you need to be brought back today? Let the storm bring you to the place of restoration. [Verse 53] "And when they had crossed over, they came to the land of Gennesaret". Immediately Jesus made them go into the boat to go to the other side. It was His intention and it was His will for them to go to the other side, not go under. It is His intention for you to go to the other side, not to go under. It doesn't matter what your storm is, it is His intention for you to go to the other side. There are other things waiting on you. Your destiny is over there, it is not in the bottom of an ocean.

The Lord Jesus brought them through their storm to the other side. That is why we are sitting here this morning. He brings us through. He doesn't want you and I to perish in our storms. He wants to bring us to the other side. So the storm becomes our learning experience along the way to get to the other side. The secret of overcoming any storm is hearing and believing His word in your storm. What is He saying to you today? Step out and stop doubting but keep your eyes on Jesus the whole time, looking unto Jesus the author and the finisher. The disciples were sent into the storm not because like Jonah they disobeyed but actually because they obeyed His word. They were walking into and through the storm in the will of God.

[Prov 3 v 5 – 6] "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him and He will direct your paths". Either that is a promise that we have to implement or it is a lie. "He brought me here, He is praying for me. He will come to my rescue, He will see me through my storm". He has the power, He has the authority over all things. In Him I can do all things. His mercy extends to His sinking saints. He brought Peter back into the boat, and the boat and everybody in it, to the other side.

Ever heard of William Cowper? William Couper knows what the storms of life mean. "In the middle of one of his storms, he couldn't take any more, thought he was going under. The crisis was so great and the pressure was so intense. Finally William Couper one bleak morning tried to put an end to it all by taking poison. The suicide attempt failed. He then hired a coach to take him to the River Thames intent to throw himself in but was strangely interrupted and restrained. The next morning he fell upon a sharp knife but the blade broke. He later tried to hang himself but was discovered, taken down, unconscious but still alive. In recovery he was given a bible. He began to read the book of Romans and was gloriously saved. Jesus came to him in his hour of darkness, in the middle of a storm. Jesus rescued him from self destruction, from a storm of despair, He saved his soul, He won his heart, He brought peace into his perplexity. He took him through to the other side. Years later he wrote these words "God moves in a mysterious way, His wonders to perform. He plants His footsteps in the sea and rides upon the storm"."

Where are you this morning in the middle of your storm? Are you beginning to sink? Jesus says to you "you are not going under, I am taking you over. Trust me. I brought you here, I am praying for you. I will come to your rescue. I will see you through your storms". My storms have made me a better person, a stronger Christian, a grateful sinner saved by grace. A fully devoted follower of Jesus. A willing worshiper at the strum of a cord, an appreciative husband, a grateful father and a more mature Pastor. Infact He is still making me a winner". I am on the winning side and so are you.

Are there any sinking saints here? You have heard His word, you stepped out in faith and you were doing well until something happened. This morning you are sinking and you are sinking fast. My advice is this. Call out to Him, swallow your pride, forget about failure,

embarrassment, peer pressure. Just cry out "Lord Jesus save me". As soon as you say it, immediately He will catch you and He will bring you back in.

Whatever storms are in your life, I am talking to the saints because the saints were in the storm. Don't think you are the only one and there is something wrong. Then you beat yourself over the head "what am I doing wrong, what have I done wrong, what have I said, what have I done, this is God's judgement on me. This is the devil". Hold it, He just says "I want to stretch you. I want to increase your faith". If I cocoon you in cotton wool you will never grow. The breath of God brings us to that place. If your marriage is under pressure, call upon Him. If you are lonely, isolated, ask Him to come to you. If you have illness and you are worried, cry to Him. If you are looking for direction, seek Him with all your heart.

Lets bow in prayer.