



## Storms and Shipwrecks

Text: Acts 27:13-44

Bible Teacher Duffy Robbins

1. Paul often found himself in storms, literal and figurative, as he sought to faithfully follow Jesus and fulfill the calling the Lord had given on his life. (See 2 Corinthians 11:23-27)
  - a. What storms are you facing right now?
  - b. How have your storms challenged your faith?
  - c. Duffy taught that how we respond to the storms often has a lot to do with what we believe about God and his love for us? What does your response to the storms in your life seem to reveal about what you believe about God and his love for you?
  
2. Read Acts 27:13-44.
  - a. The storms in our lives are often used by God to bring about his purposes. What seems to be God's overarching purpose through this event from Paul's life recorded for us in the book of Acts?
  - b. What are ways we can fight to keep perspective when in the middle of a storm?
  - c. As you look at the storms in your life, what are ways you can see God's faithfulness in the midst of the storm, and how have you seen him use the storms in your life for a larger purpose?
  
3. It is natural to ask, "Why?" in the middle of the storms in life, perhaps especially if we believe we are trying to live faithfully to God. However, all we have to do is look at the life of Christ to break the lie that "faithfulness = no storms" in the Christian life. Read Hebrews 12:1-2.
  - a. To what does the author compare the Christian life to, and how does that relate to the idea that the Christian life will never be "storm free"?
  - b. What does the author suggest as resources to help us endure the storms in life? What would this look like at a practical level?
  - c. What was it that enabled Jesus to endure the "storm" of the cross? What was the "joy that was set before him"?
  - d. What hope does the fact that Jesus willingly embraced the storm of the cross in our place provide for us that we can cling to in the middle of our storms?

Challenge: What are ways your group members can support each other as you weather the storms of your life? What could you use from your group right now? How can you show love and support to another group member in the middle of his/her storm?

Prayer:

But now thus says the Lord, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: “Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. Isa. 43:1-3

Heavenly Father, your Word is a balm for the broken, ballast for the bewildered, and bread for the hungry. This isn't theory, or only good theology; it's experientially true. You've promised to “show up” and be enough, and you are. In the storms of life, you are nearer than the storms themselves.

As Isaiah reminds us, you've created us and you've redeemed us. You summoned us by name, calling us to life in the gospel; and have given us the sweetest name imaginable—“Mine.” No more condemnation; no more orphan-like spirituality; no more making a name for ourselves. We are yours and your banner over us is love. Hallelujah, many times over.

Father, you don't promise we won't experience floods and torrents, fires and flames. But you do promise you will be with us, and that we won't suffer ultimate harm. To know you are near and to know you are good is all we really need. We will go anywhere and do anything, as long as we're convinced that you're with us and for us.

We know ourselves to be “precious and honored in your sight,” because of what you've done for us in Jesus. We praise you for the one and only truly indescribable gift—given for us and to us (2 Cor. 9:15). And since you didn't spare your own Son, we can trust you graciously to give us everything else we need (Rom. 8:32), in current and future storms. We don't have to be afraid of anything or anyone, for you are with us and you are for us. So very Amen we pray, in Jesus triumphant and trustworthy name.

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/scotty-smith/a-prayer-for-knowing-gods-presence-in-the-storms-of-life/>

## STUDY DEEPER

### **If God Is with Me, Why Did This Happen?**

“If the Lord is with us, why then has all this happened to us?” (Judges 6:13).

Gideon asked the question thousands of years ago, and we have been asking it ever since. Haven't we all asked that question secretly, if not out loud, at some point in suffering?

The Israelites were disheartened by the Midianites' continual oppression. To many, like Gideon, these hardships didn't make sense if God truly was with his people. They had heard the stories of God's power, but since they had never seen it displayed, they doubted his presence. That's why Gideon asked the angel of the Lord, almost sarcastically, “Where are all his wonderful deeds that our fathers recounted to us?” He followed his question with bleak despair, “But now the Lord has forsaken us” (Judges 6:13).

Looking at the circumstances, Gideon saw no evidence that God was there or that God cared.

### **Why Did This Happen?**

For years I felt like Gideon. I wondered why hard things happened when a loving God was supposedly in control. When people told me that God loved me, I thought, If God loves me, then why did this happen to me?

As a polio survivor from infancy, I had multiple surgeries each year, living in and out of the hospital. Throughout my childhood and adolescence, I was convinced that a good God couldn't love me and watch me suffer. So, I had concluded that God wasn't good, didn't exist, or didn't care. If he was good and cared about me, then why had all that happened to me?

But when I was 16, God in his mercy answered that lifelong question through John 9. His answer was simple and direct: "that the works of God might be displayed" (John 9:3). And with that revelation, my world shifted.

### **One Little Word Fells Us**

I took comfort in the truth that God was with me and could use my suffering to demonstrate his glory, but when new struggles surfaced, sometimes I would return to that familiar question: If the Lord is with me, then why did all this happen?

After my son died, I felt abandoned by God. If God loved me, why didn't he spare Paul's life? And after my husband left me, I would scream into the darkness, "God, if you love me, why are you letting this happen to me?"

Those questions must have delighted Satan. Satan turns truth into doubt with that little word: if. Satan's temptation of Jesus began with the words "If you are the Son of God" (Matthew 4:3). Satan and Jesus both knew that Jesus was the Son of God. Everyone at Jesus's baptism knew he was the Son of God (Matthew 3:17). Yet when Jesus was alone in the wilderness, Satan tempted him to doubt what he undeniably knew to be true.

### **The Lord Is with You**

Satan tempts us in the same way. When our prayers seemingly go unanswered, Satan wants us to mistrust God and question his promises. Satan wants us to doubt God's goodness and demand proof of his love, inciting us to ask, "If God loves me, then why am I suffering?" Or as Gideon asked, "If the Lord is with us, then why has this happened?"

If the Lord is with us? If God loves me? Those statements should never have an "if" before them. God's presence and love are guaranteed to those in Christ. When Satan tempts us to question God's character, we must stand firmly on the truth of Scripture.

In Christ we know that God is always with us. "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me" (Psalm 23:4). Jesus says, "Behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20). He will never fail us or forsake us.

## **Results of His Love**

Our Lord loves us extravagantly. God says, “I have loved you with an everlasting love” (Jeremiah 31:3). Jesus says, “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you” (John 15:9). In love, God sent his own Son to die for our sins. Nothing can separate us from his love.

All of Scripture assures us that God is with us and that he loves us. Many of us have known this truth from childhood: “Jesus loves me – this I know. For the Bible tells me so.” With reassurances everywhere, we must reframe our question, instead asking, “Because God loves me, then why did this happen?”

Because God loves me. This phrase changes everything. It reorients my heart. It turns me Godward. When I ground myself on the truth that God loves me, I view my situation through a new lens. Rather than questioning his love, I seek to align my thoughts and actions with his, knowing everything in my life is a result of his love and his presence, not his disfavor or absence.

Rather than insisting that God answer me, I can instead ask myself: What is God doing in my suffering? What can I learn from this trial?

## **Receiving Trials with Faith**

With this new perspective, believing by faith that my trials are given out of love, I can deliberately look for the good that God is bringing from my suffering.

Sometimes the good is hard to see. And the little I do see can feel insignificant in comparison to the pain I’m enduring. It is then that I must remind myself that my afflictions are producing “an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison” (2 Corinthians 4:17). And God has a purpose in each of them.

While we may not learn the specific purpose behind each struggle, we do know that God uses suffering to increase our dependence on him. To deepen our faith and draw us closer to him. To refine our character, to prepare us for ministry, to comfort others with the comfort we’ve received. And as we rejoice in him even through pain, God is glorified.

## **God Doesn’t Love Suffering**

God doesn’t love your suffering. He loves you. He will walk with you through the darkest valleys and will never ever leave you.

When God brings trials into your life, don’t question his love or turn away. God is doing something breathtaking in you, for you, and through you. Because the Lord is with you, and because the Lord loves you, everything that happens to you is filled with divine purpose. Every trial you endure has passed through God’s loving hands. And one day, when your faith becomes sight, you will thank him for every difficulty.

<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/if-god-is-with-me-why-did-this-happen>