



The Safest Place During Life's Storms

Matthew 14:22-33 | April 5, 2020

English Translation for Rev. Jeremiah Cheung

In the Bible, we find many accounts of men encountering storms. While Jonah was on a ship to Tarshish, a storm suddenly broke out. When Jesus was in a boat with his disciples, a storm came up without warning. Paul was on a ship to Rome when the sea met rough waters due to a storm.

The storms of life can come suddenly and unexpectedly – a sudden illness, an economic downturn, a family or marriage crisis. Today, the whole world is in the midst of the Coronavirus storm. Now, may I ask, “Where is the safest place to be in this world?”

Let me explain with three words: What, Why, Where.

I. What are the storms in life?



Painting: *The Wedding at Cana* by Paolo Veronese.
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The Wedding at Cana. When Jesus was on earth, the first miracle he performed was that of turning water into wine. Why did Jesus perform this miracle?

The Bible states that the wine had run out. The wine running out at a wedding celebration is a storm of life. In a wedding, the wine represents the pleasures and enjoyment of life and suddenly, it had run out. How come?

When we prepare for a wedding, we make sure to count the number of guests invited, and we make sure to prepare enough food; in fact, we often prepare extra. How is it that the wine had run out? Something unexpected must have happened. Perhaps some guests brought along their whole family while some guests must have drunk more than expected. Whatever the reason, the wine ran out.

Isn't this exactly how life is? One day, life is moving smoothly and wonderfully, and the next moment, startling problems arise. The collapse of the Lehman Brothers' bank affected the entire world's economy. A devastating flood occurred in the Philippines some years ago –



another storm of life. Someone in the family is diagnosed with cancer – once more a storm has come. Someone in the family has been kidnapped – this is yet another storm.

Job 5:7 says, "Yet man is born to trouble as surely as sparks fly upward." Job 14: 1 says, "Mortals, born of women, are of few days and full of trouble."

Life is full of troubles. We may have entered the Year 2020 blissfully, but a storm has suddenly come upon us. Now the whole world is enveloped in fear. Church, we must be prepared for such storms in our hearts and minds.

II. Why are there storms in life?

The Bible chronicles three instances where a storm came. One was during the time of Jonah, and two more storms happened during Jesus' time. These three storms tell us three reasons why storms happen:

1. *God's Discipline – Jonah's Storm*

We are all familiar with Jonah's story. God wanted Jonah to preach to the city of Nineveh, but he was unwilling to go. Instead, Jonah went to Tarshish. Nineveh was the capital of Assyria, an enemy of Israel, and Jonah was unwilling to preach to Nineveh, so he went to Tarshish.



The Book of Jonah. Illustration by Distant Shores Media / Sweet Publishing via [WikiMedia Commons](#)

Now the Lord sent a great wind on the sea, a violent storm. It was so strong that the ship threatened to break up. Even the sailors were afraid and each one called to his own god. While this was happening, only one man – Jonah – wasn't praying; in fact he was the only one fast asleep. The captain went to him and asked, "How can you sleep? Why aren't you praying?" Jonah replied, "I am not praying because I know why the storm came up. It is because of me, because I refused to obey God. Throw me into the sea and it will calm down."

The Lord sent the storm to bring his servant Jonah to repentance. This is a storm of God's discipline.



Jonah's name means "dove" but he was a disobedient dove. He tried to fly away to a place God didn't want him to go and so the Lord sent a storm to discipline him.

Rockefeller's Story. There was once a rich man by the name of Rockefeller. When he was young, his goal in life was to make money. At the age of 33, he had already become a millionaire. By age 43, he was already the richest man in the United States. But at 53, he developed a condition called alopecia. His hair and eyebrows had fallen off. He kept losing weight and he could only drink a glass of milk and eat a few cookies each day.

When his doctor told him that he may not be able to reach his 55th birthday, Rockefeller couldn't sleep that night. He said, "I had been working so hard to make money, yet I can't eat nor sleep. What's the point of living such a miserable life?" He suddenly jumped up and shouted, "What is money?!" And he prayed, "O God, you are my everything!"



Interior of The Riverside Church in New York City.
Photo by Ad Meskens via [WikiMedia Commons](#)

From that day on, he went to church to worship God every week. Previously, faith was only a part of his life because making money was more important than faith. After he started going to church, he was moved to build a church for God. The church later became the Riverside Church in New York. He also dedicated his property and started the Rockefeller Foundation for charity. Amazingly, his health slowly recovered. The doctor had said that he may not live to his 55th year, but he eventually lived to the age of 98 before leaving this world.

If you are now in the storm of life, think about this: "Is this a storm of God's discipline?" Because God loves you, He will discipline you. But as long as you turn back, you can start life anew.

2. *Satan's Attack – Jesus rebukes the storm*

Mark 4: 37-39 records that Jesus and his disciples were on a boat and a storm came up as Jesus slept in the boat. When the disciples woke Jesus up, Jesus rebuked the storm. Were you to rebuke something, what would you rebuke? A human, an animal, or even a tree, right? Because these are living things, but how can you rebuke inanimate things like the wind, the waves, the stones, the wood?



Painting: *Christ in the Storm on the Lake of Galilee* by Rembrandt. Image is in the public domain via [WikiMedia Commons](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Christ_in_the_Storm_on_the_Lake_of_Galilee_-_Rembrandt_van_Rijn_-_WGA01499.jpg)

Yet Jesus rebuked the wind. Seemingly, there is a problem behind the wind and the waves. You see, Jesus was not rebuking the wind and waves. Jesus was rebuking the power behind the wind and the waves. It is the power that opposes God, the power of the devil. According to Mark 5:1, "They went across the lake to the region of the Gerasenes. A man with an impure spirit lived there." Jesus went to cast out the evil spirits. The storm came from the devil, that is why Jesus rebuked the waves and the wind.

In life, some storms are attacks from Satan. Satan seeks to obstruct our walk with God. He wants us to abandon following God. But as long as Jesus is in the boat of our life, we don't have to be afraid: "With Christ in my vessel, I can smile at the storm."

When my youngest daughter sees her brother ride a roller coaster, she also wants to try. But she was always a little scared, so she'd say every time, "Dad, please sit with me." And as long as I was next to her, she was not afraid. Actually, I am a little scared myself but because of my daughter's request, I would go. If the Lord is by your side, you don't have to be afraid at all. He will rebuke the troubles that Satan throws at you.

3. *Doing God's Will – Jesus Walks on the Sea*

In Matthew 14:22, we read: "Immediately, Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd." In some versions, it says Jesus urged the disciples to get into the boat. The word 'urged' is a strong word. What does it mean 'to urge' someone? It is when others are not willing to do something but you compel them to do it.

We may have experienced joining tour groups where a few people move slowly. Some people are unwilling to get back on the tour bus because they are still shopping or looking at something, and so everyone else has to wait for them. The tour guide would shout, "Come back now, faster!" This is what it means to urge someone.



Jesus urged his disciples to get into the boat, but He Himself went and prayed on the mountain. This is a difficult thing for us to understand. The disciples followed Jesus' will. The disciples had obeyed the Lord but they encountered the storm. Don't we often say, "As long as you do the will of God, everything will go well?" Psalm 1:3 tells us that when someone obeys, "Everything he does prospers." So why was there a storm?

It turns out that those who do the will of God still experience a lot of trouble, too!

- **Joseph** knew through a dream that his brothers, even his parents, would bow down to him, yet he was sold to Egypt and served as a slave for 13 years . . . even though he had obeyed God's will!
- **Moses** had been obeying God's will when he went before Pharaoh to ask him to let the Israelites leave Egypt, but Pharaoh added a heavier burden to the Israelites. After the Exodus, Moses encountered the Israelites' grumbling again and again; they even wanted to stone him . . . but he was doing God's will!
- **David** was anointed king by Samuel at a very young age, but was hunted down by Saul and had to be on the run for at least ten years . . . even though he was doing the will of God!
- **Nehemiah** was willing to leave his position as a cupbearer in the palace of a king to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the city wall. But he faced relentless attacks from the enemy. His own people, the Israelites, attacked him . . . all while he was doing the will of God!
- In the New Testament, **the twelve apostles** obeyed the Great Commission. They preached the gospel to all nations and as a result, they were martyred for the Lord.
- The elderly **apostle John** was exiled to the island of Patmos though he was doing the will of God.
- The great **apostle, Paul**, obeyed God's will all his life. He said, "I was not disobedient to the vision from heaven." But he was martyred for the Lord; he died fulfilling the will of God.



Painting: *Joseph Being Sold Into Slavery* by Alexander Maximilian Seitz. Image in the public domain via [WikiMedia Commons](#)

Do not think that you will not encounter difficulties when you obey God's will, and do not assume either that when everything is going well, you are in the will of God. There will always



be adversities and difficulties in this life. The only difference is, when you obey God's will, the Lord will give you strength to face the difficulties of life.

As He faced the cross, Jesus was overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. The Bible says, "An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him." Jesus still had to face the cross, but He now had strength to face death on the cross. When we are in the will of God and are faced with life's storms, we must ask the Lord to give us strength to face them.

III. Where is the safest place in the storms of life?



Painting: *St. Peter Walking on the Water* by Alessandro Allori in Public domain via [WikiMedia Commons](#)

The Gospel of Matthew records Peter saying to Jesus, "Lord, if it is you, tell me to come to you on the water." Jesus said, "Come." Then Peter got out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus.

Sometimes we are a little prejudiced against Peter because Peter loved to talk and was a bit overbearing. All twelve disciples had been in the boat waiting for Jesus, but Peter had to say: "Lord, if it is you, tell me to come to you on the water." How annoying! But then again, if you think about it, could it be that Peter felt that the safest place in that storm was to be beside the Lord instead of on the boat?

The boat was in danger of sinking; it was not a very safe place. Perhaps Peter thought, "As long as I have the Lord by my side, I am in the safest place I can be." As you face storms in life, where do you believe is the safest place to be? With your good friends? With your family? Relying on your money? Your power? I hope we will be like Peter and know that the safest place is with the Lord.

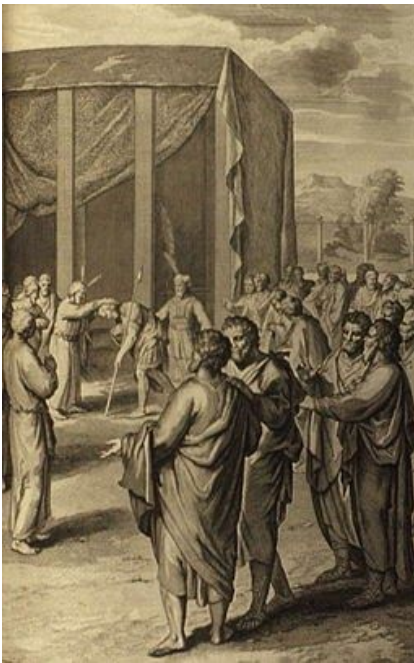
While Peter climbed out of the boat and went towards Jesus, he became afraid when he saw how strong the wind was. His eyes had turned from the Lord to the waves. As his faith wavered, he began to sink. He shouted, "Lord, save me!" Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. What can we learn from Peter's experience?

1. True prayers need not be long, yet they must have substance, have content. If Peter had prayed starting from the Book of Genesis, then his cry "Lord, save me!" would have been uttered only when he was already under the sea.



2. Peter had almost reached Jesus. Although he sank, he had already walked on water. What about the other eleven disciples? While they did not sink into the water, they did not experience walking on the sea.
3. I realized that when Jesus reached out his hand and lifted Peter up, the Lord and Peter walked back to the boat hand in hand, for surely Peter would never let go of the Lord's hand. All his life, Peter would never forget that he had walked hand in hand with the Lord on the rough sea. This experience is so precious. No matter how much money you have, you will not be able to buy such an experience.

We may never experience walking on water, but when we are in the storms of life, we can still hold on to the Lord's hand and go through the difficulties with the Lord. The safest place to be is by the Lord's side. Paul writes in 2 Timothy 4:17 "But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength." When Paul was facing death, he declared, "The Lord stood at my side and gave me strength." When the Lord is by our side, we have nothing to fear.



Moses Names Joshua to Succeed Him.
Illustration by Gerard Hoet et al, image courtesy of Bizzell Bible Collection via [WikiMedia Commons](#)

The Lord said to Joshua three times in Joshua 1: "Be strong and courageous, do not be afraid." At that time Joshua was faced with a great mission: he was to be the successor of Moses. If Moses had been an incompetent leader, it would have been easy to pick up his baton, but Moses was Israel's greatest leader. It was difficult to pick up Moses' baton because people will surely compare Joshua to him. By picking up Moses' baton, Joshua was expected to bring the Israelites into the land of Canaan. There were 31 kings waiting for them in the land of Canaan! If you knew there were 31 enemies waiting for you, will you not be afraid? The Lord told Joshua three times, "Do not be afraid, be strong and courageous." And three times, the Lord also told him, "I am with you."

God's presence is the reason we can be unafraid. God's presence is not only with us, but God's presence also means God's power and God's grace are with us.

The safest place in the storm is not in the boat, but with the Lord.

Is the Lord with you? Do you have a Lord?