

Paul vs. Storms

John 16:33

February 17, 2024

I love a good thunderstorm. We don't get really good thunderstorms here in California. Michigan, now, they have GOOD thunderstorms. Towering clouds, lightening, thunder, sheets of rain – the power of it is something to behold.

Today we are going to talk about a very different kind of storm – the storm of life.

We don't have to go out of our way to find storms - storms find us:

- Storms of our own making.
- Storms created by other people. Storms that aren't really ours but we are caught up in them.
- Storms that occur simply because we live on planet earth.

We really do a great disservice if we leave the impression in our preaching or witnessing that becoming a Christian will automatically exempt a person from experiencing troubles or difficulties in life. Job said, "A man is born unto trouble" – and that truth applies to everyone.

Paul is the poster-child for experiences in trouble. Very few of us can rattle off the kind of trouble Paul lists in 2 Corinthians 11:23-28

- Seeing that many boast according to the flesh, I also will boast. ¹⁹ For you put up with fools gladly, since you yourselves are wise! ²⁰ For you put up with it if one brings you into bondage, if one devours you, if one takes from you, if one exalts himself, if one strikes you on the face. ²¹ To our shame, I say that we were too weak for that! But in whatever anyone is bold -- I speak foolishly -- I am bold also. ²² Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? So am I. ²³ Are they ministers of Christ? -- I speak as a fool -- I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. ²⁴ From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. ²⁵ Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; ²⁶ in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; ²⁷ in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness -- ²⁸ besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches.

If anyone understands trouble and the storms of life, its Paul! BUT trouble couldn't keep Paul down. He refused to be defeated by trouble. Trouble couldn't detour him from serving God and fulfilling his mission. Paul had a deep and abiding faith in God. Regardless of circumstances Paul KNEW God was there and involved – Paul knew he wasn't alone and he could trust his FUTURE to the One who had been so faithful in the PAST.

Paul understood that we are fragile, but that God uses our fragility to shine through to an equally broken world. Paul knew that it was not about him, it was all about God:

- 2 Corinthians 4:6-9 - For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. ⁷ But we have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. ⁸ We are hard pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; ⁹ persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed –

Paul was content regardless of the circumstances he found himself in:

- Philippians 4:11-13 - Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: ¹² I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things, I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. ¹³ I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

Paul had settled the question long ago. God is trustworthy. Period.

The truths we hold about God (his intent) will influence our ability and even our desire to have faith and trust in Him

Do you believe that what God says about Himself is true? More importantly, do you believe they are true for you?

What happens if you don't get the answer you want or you get no answer at all? What if you have to go through the storm, when you'd prefer to go around it? Is God still worthy of your trust? How you answer that question will determine how far God will be able to get in your life.

Great preacher, you're thinking. But I'm not Paul for crying out loud!!! He is a great man of faith and I quake in my shoes when a light breeze blows my way – forget about a typhoon!!

- Oswald Chambers: "Faith is *deliberate* confidence in the character of God whose ways you may not understand at the time"
- Corrie Ten Boom: "Never be afraid to trust an unknown future to a *known* God"

How do we develop faith? There is no secret handshake or 12-step program. Everyday get up and be deliberate in your relationship with Jesus. Choose to seek Him even when you don't feel like it.

Reflect on His words:

- I am the bread of life
- I am the water of life
- I am the light of the world
- I am the door
- I am the way, the truth and the life
- I will give you rest
- I will not cast you out

Reflect on His life. Reflect on His death. Reflect on His resurrection. Reflect on His heavenly ministry. Reflect. On. Jesus.

The secret to Paul's unwavering faith in the face of every storm was that his eyes were fixed on Jesus. He knew he was not alone and that no matter the outcome he was secure in the hands of Jesus.

- Romans 8:28-39 - And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose. ²⁹ For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to *become* conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren; ³⁰ and whom He predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified. ³¹ What then shall we say to these things? If God *is* for us, who *is* against us? ³² He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? ³³ Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; ³⁴ who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. ³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ³⁶ Just as it is written, "For Thy sake we are being put to death all day long; We were considered as sheep to be slaughtered." ³⁷ But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.