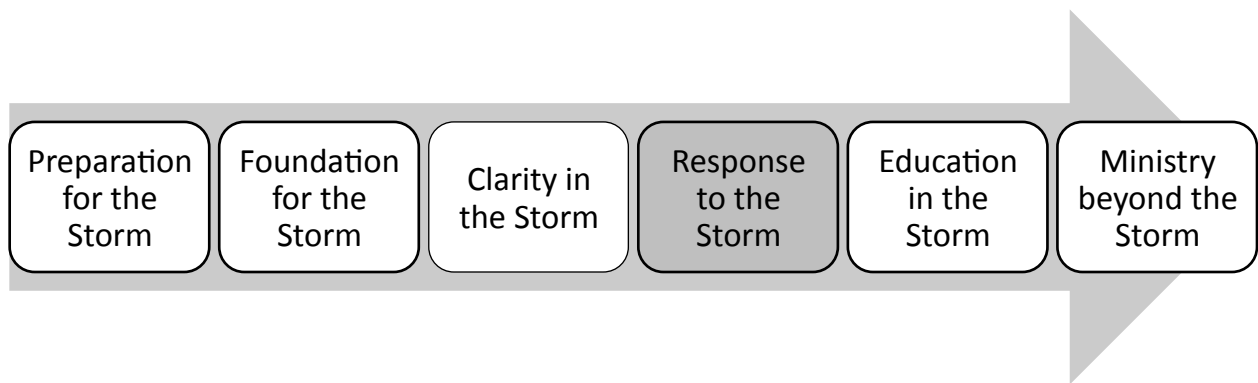


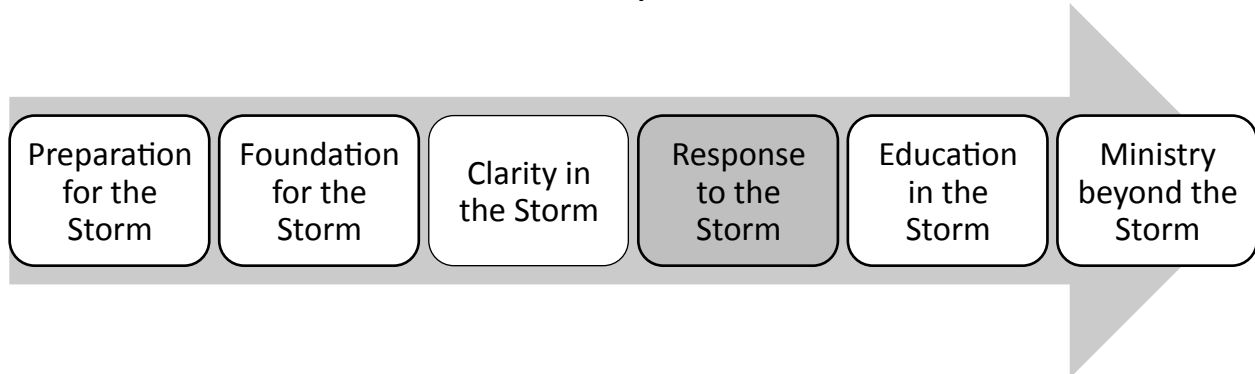
SECTION 4

Response to the Storm



Your response to the storm tells a lot about your concept of God

**Chapter 19 – Jesus Expects Us to Remember What He Has Already
Taught Us in the Storms
SECTION FOUR – Response to the Storm**



Our Eternal Focal Point

God does not exist for us. We exist for Him. We were created by Him and for His pleasure.¹⁴² Contrary to the idea that many churches proclaim today, God does not exist to make us happy. He is not our divine butler, ready to meet our every whim and desire. It's all about His glory and His eternal purpose in Jesus.

He loves us in grace with unconditional love. God has provided for us all things that we need for life and godliness.¹⁴³ He is the great giver and we are unworthy recipients. God is the initiator and we are the responders. Yet, God does have certain expectations for us. He expects us to love Him with all our hearts. He expects us to obey Him willingly. He expects us to be conformed to the image of Jesus¹⁴⁴ and to do our part in the sanctification process.¹⁴⁵ He expects us not to sin, yet He has made provisions for us when we do sin.¹⁴⁶

Some feel that God's expectations of us are difficult. No! They are far greater than that – they are impossible! We can never in ourselves meet the expectations of God. The fact that they are greater than our hearts is what moves us to see our need of Jesus and His grace, power, and life manifested through us. It is only by His life in us by the indwelling Holy Spirit that we can fulfill the righteous demands of the Law.¹⁴⁷

It is by a regenerated heart that we can *“delight in the law of God according to the inner man.”*¹⁴⁸ Therefore we can affirm that *“His commandments are not grievous to us.”*¹⁴⁹ Yet, all of us

¹⁴² Revelation 4:11

¹⁴³ 2 Peter 1:3-4

¹⁴⁴ Romans 8:28-29

¹⁴⁵ Philippians 2:12-13

¹⁴⁶ 1 John 2:1-3

¹⁴⁷ Romans 8:4

¹⁴⁸ Romans 7:22

who are saved must also say that we fall short of God's expectations of us: *"For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do."*¹⁵⁰

In this fourth section of the book, we will look at five areas of expectation that Jesus has for us. In this chapter we will look specifically at His expectation that we remember what He has already taught us in the storms we have been through.

It is no accident that Jesus sends the disciples into two storms. The first storm had lessons for them to learn. The second storm should have been the time that they applied what they had already learned in the first storm.

God does not lead us by chance but by providence. In John 6, Jesus asked Philip a very directed question. He singled Philip out from the other eleven, as if this question and the attached lesson were specifically for him. Jesus asked Philip, *"Where shall we buy bread, that these may eat?"* Okay, that's a fine question – but it is the following statement that is so revealing: *"But this He said to test him, for He Himself knew what He would do."* Jesus already had a plan. It was predetermined that He would feed the five thousand. But He also wanted it to be a learning experience for the disciples, and in this case, especially for Philip.

Jesus knew what He was going to do and yet He still asked the disciples the question. Why? He was testing their faith to help them grow. You can expect God to also create questions in your life in order that the answers may be found only in Jesus. God sees things in us that we do not yet see. He brings us into circumstances to help us see what He sees.

*He was testing their faith to help them grow.
You can expect God to also create questions in your life
that the answers may be found only in Jesus.*

Early in my ministry God led me to face repetitive storms or circumstances beyond my control that wore me out emotionally, physically, and spiritually. Church members were coming to me for counsel about circumstances in their lives. I invested many hours with them individually.

The problem was that the same people came back again and again, each with a new set of circumstances. They had been through a storm and did not learn what God was teaching. They only wanted relief from the pressure, not understanding that the pressures on the outside were ordained by God to prove them, reveal their weakness, manifest the life of Jesus in them and teach them to learn to walk by a higher principle (2 Corth 4:7-12).

¹⁴⁹ 1 John 5:3

¹⁵⁰ Romans 7:15

I was being asked a question, *“How are you going to meet their needs?”* My actions were saying, *“Lord, I will meet their needs one by one.”* What I did not see was the repetitive principle that God was having me face over and over. God was testing them to reveal their weakness and to get them to look to Jesus as the only source of their satisfaction. What they wanted were answers to their questions. What God wanted was to produce in their lives a closer personal walk with Jesus. God showed me that I was being drained emotionally, physically, and spiritually because I was drawing from my own resources and not from His eternal resource.

God Himself had ordered their storms and I could not get them out of it by answering a few questions and offering emotional support. They had to grow through their storm and not run from it. They had to come to the point where they believed that:

- God’s Word has the solution for every human problem.
- The Holy Spirit will create the need and desire for Jesus in the heart of a believer.
- The Holy Spirit is capable of teaching God’s children through the Word of God.
- God uses persuasion the outside to manifest the life of Jesus on the inside through the Holy Spirit.

When I recognized these principles, I began encouraging them to stop running and start growing through their storms by getting in the Word of God.

- I gave an assignment to an individual who had been to see me many times: *“You must read the entire Book of Job before you call me again.”* I wanted him to hear from God about the trials and tough times he was going through. That person never called me again but did report that God had answered him clearly when he sought the Lord’s Will in His Word.
- I gave another person the assignment of reading the entire Book of Proverbs and asking God for wisdom, marking those verses that the Holy Spirit emphasized to him. That one exercise made a significant impact on his life.
- I said to one woman who had been to many professional counselors before coming to see me, *“I believe that God is trying to draw you to Himself. I would like to suggest that you read the book of Psalms. As you do, personalize it and pray God’s own Words back to Him. The Book of Psalms will allow you to vent every human emotion you feel and will allow you to begin to think God’s thoughts.”* She reported that after years of counseling, this was her turning point. She discovered the principle that God was drawing her to Himself in His Word through her storm.

Jesus repeatedly led me through the same storm. I became drained by counseling until I learned the lesson He was teaching me. What a relief it was to change my style of counseling

from trying to listen and give answers, to listening and then pointing people to find the answer in developing a closer walk with God in the Word.

The Principle of Repetition

In the first feeding of the multitude and the first storm, Jesus tested the disciples. Jesus tested their faith, challenged their faith, and built their faith. They grew and learned through the first storm and first feeding, and would later face a second storm and second feeding. Notice the principle of repetition. Jesus expects us to remember what He has already taught us in order that we might apply it in the future. But the disciples did not remember their lessons, demonstrating the same fear and lack of faith as before.

The First Storm

Then His disciples came to Him and awoke Him, saying, "Lord, save us! We are perishing!" But He said to them, "Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?" Then He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm. So the men marveled, saying, "Who can this be, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?" (Matthew 8:25-26).

The Second Storm:

And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out for fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid" (Matthew 14:26-27).

The First Feeding:

When it was evening, His disciples came to Him, saying, "This is a deserted place, and the hour is already late. Send the multitudes away, that they may go into the villages and buy themselves food." But Jesus said to them, "They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat." And they said to Him, "We have here only five loaves and two fish" (Matthew 14:15-17).

The Second Feeding

Then His disciples said to Him, "Where could we get enough bread in the wilderness to fill such a great multitude?" (Matthew 15:33).

Then His disciples answered Him, "How can one satisfy these people with bread here in the wilderness?" (Mark 8:4).

The disciples are living on the same spiritual plane in the second storm as they were in the first. The same is true of the two mass feedings. They were still dominated by fear and not faith, still thinking in terms of what they could do, rather than what God could do. They were still drawing from their limited resources when Jesus was moving them to draw from His unlimited

resources. Jesus expected the disciples to have remembered what He had taught them in the first storm and to have applied it to their second storm. He also expected them to have learned something more about Him and faith in the first feeding and to have applied it in the second feeding.

Storms, Part Two ... and Three ...

Most Christians have faced a second or third storm, not understanding that if we do not grow in our storms, then we are destined to repeat them. We will never mature, as God wants us to. Where are you in the following scenarios?

- As a spiritual baby, you tend to think in terms of what God can do for you.
- As a young soldier, you think in terms of what you can do for God.
- As spiritual parents, you emphasize abiding in Christ and think in terms of what God can do through you.

From Limited Resources to God's Unlimited Resource

While pastoring in Gresham, Oregon, I invited Dr. Wayne McDill to preach a revival meeting for us. Our people were built up by his preaching. As we discussed the goals of preaching, I never will forget one thing Wayne shared with me, *"We should preach to build faith in the lives of God's people."*

Over the years I have found this to be a great need in our people. If we only preach to build their knowledge, we reduce Christianity to a philosophy and religion rather than a way of life. The Pharisees and Sadducees had a lot of knowledge, but they did not walk in faith.

Jesus expected the disciples to exercise faith in daily living. When the disciples faced the second storm and the second feeding of the multitudes, they could have remembered their past failures and trusted Jesus in the second storm and second feeding.

*Jesus expected the disciples to
grow and exercise faith in daily living.*

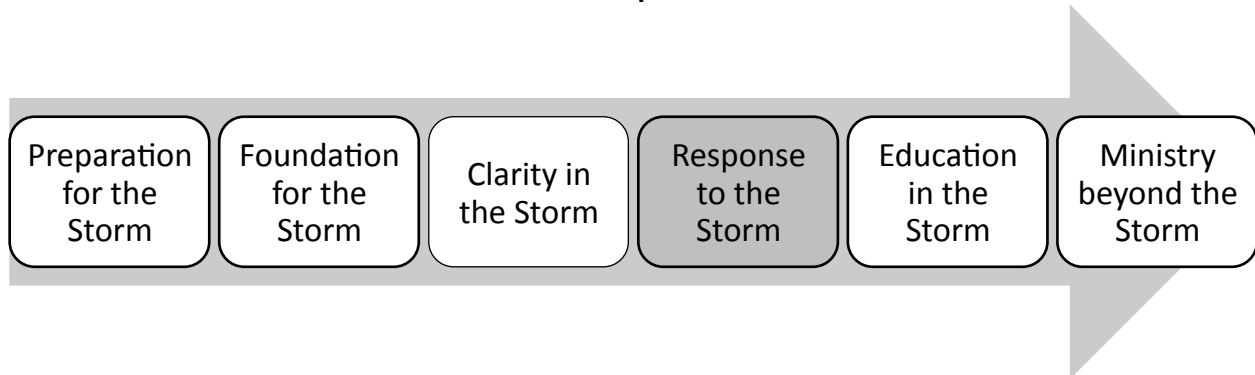
The disciples could have prayed, *"Lord, in this second storm I remember Your example of rest. I'm no match for these contrary winds. Therefore I will trust You and yield to You in this situation. By faith I give You thanks rather than murmur and complain. My eyes are on You."*

I believe God wants us to remember all the truths He has taught us. This will help us to walk by faith. Expect God to continue to lead you into repetitive situations. Jesus may ask, *"So what are we going to do in this circumstance? Will you trust Me?"* He may ask over and over with new circumstances that stretch our faith until, we can answer, *"We're trusting You, Lord. Our eyes are on You."*

My dear Christian friend, we must learn that God uses pressure on the outside to manifest the life of Jesus through us. Do not wait for the pressure to stop before you experience joy and peace. Consider 2 Corinthians 4:7-12.

*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—
¹⁰ always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. ¹¹ For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. ¹² So then death is working in us, but life in you (2 Corinthians 4:7-12).*

Chapter 20 – Jesus Expects Us to Discover the Power of Prayer in the Storms
SECTION FOUR – Response to the Storm



Prayer Has No Limitations

*“We have not because we ask not.”*¹⁵¹ It’s that simple. God wants us to *“ask Him.”* But He wants prayer to be our **first** response, not our **last** response in the middle of a storm.

God will often use storms to help us discover the power and place of prayer in our lives. Jesus expected the disciples to pray in their storm. He had already prepared them to pray by teaching them about prayer. Now was the time to stop studying about prayer and simply to pray.

Jesus was not physically present in the second storm but the twelve had to learn an important lesson: that prayer has no limitations. Jesus had already taught them, *“Your father knows what things you need before you ask Him”*¹⁵² and *“Ask and it shall be given you.”*¹⁵³

As the story of the second storm begins, we find Jesus up on a mountain praying. *“And when He had 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 now in the middle of the sea, tossed by the waves, for the wind was contrary”* (Matthew 14:23-24).

One of the foundations for prayer is the awareness that God sees, knows, and is ready to meet your needs even before you ask. It is this asking in faith that builds even greater faith. Jesus had given them the command to go to the other side of the lake. They knew Jesus had answered their question in the first storm, *“Master, don’t You care that we are perishing?”* Putting all that together, their need could have been a reason to call a prayer meeting. By exercising faith, their prayer meeting could have turned into a praise meeting. It did not. They did what most of us do. They called a **worry meeting**.

In a prayer meeting, the typical conversation could have been *“Well, fellows, the storm is getting pretty bad, but we shouldn’t worry. Jesus was the one that sent us to the other side. We*

¹⁵¹ James 4:3

¹⁵² Matthew 6:8

¹⁵³ Matthew 7:7

also have the example of His rest and power in the first storm. We know that God is sovereign and every storm is under His control. We're sure that even now Jesus is interceding for us, even though we cannot see Him. So, which one of you guys wants to lead us in praise, thanking God for what He is about to do to get us to the other side as He promised." That's what should have happened.

What usually happens might sound like this: *"Look fellows, I was not comfortable sailing across this lake without Jesus. You know if I had my way, we would have walked on land around this lake. I don't want to say 'I told you so.' I certainly don't know what we can do now. At least we should turn back and row away from the storm."*

It is much easier to try to do something for God than it is to believe God to act on His promises. Doing something for God is limited to what we can do. Believing God moves us beyond our resources to what God can do. And it requires faith.

*Believing God moves us beyond our resources
to what God can do. And it requires faith.*

If we are left to ourselves, we will never discover what God can do. God will allow us to face a situation where prayer is not one option, it becomes the only option.

In my first pastorate, through door-to-door visitation, I discovered a couple who were lost but open to the gospel. I had the privilege of leading the wife to the Lord, but the husband refused to trust Jesus.

One morning I woke with a burden for that husband, and I prayed for him. I decided that I must go directly to his house and try to witness to him again. I was willing to do what I could do for God, but I believe God allowed a problem to teach me a new dimension in prayer.

My car would not start. I thought it was strange that I was burdened and willing to go and witness to this man and God allowed my car to die. I tried everything I knew to get the car started, but nothing happened. I prayed for wisdom to know how to fix the car. I cleaned the battery post; I fiddled with this and then that. Still, the car would not start. I continued to pray that God would help me get my car started. Finally I gave up in frustration. I felt that God had let me down. I was willing to do what I could do for God and He was not present to help me.

The burden for this man was still pressing on my heart and I could do nothing. If I could not go to him, I would call him and try to witness to him by phone. Again, I was frustrated because he was not home. Yet the burden was still on my heart and I became even more frustrated because I could not act on it.

That burden led me to kneel beside my bed and pray for him. I remember telling God all that I tried to do and how helpless I felt. Then it was as though my heart was broken for this lost

husband. I wept profusely for him. I had never experienced such a burden to pray for another man.

It was as though God had let me feel His own burden for a lost soul. I had taken the position of an intercessor. Here in this position of prayer I was no longer limited by a car that would not start, a phone that was not answered, or by what I could do for God.

What was on God's heart was placed on my heart, and the Holy Spirit was released to fall with mighty conviction on my friend wherever He was. As quickly as the burden began, it ended. When it was lifted, I knew that God had heard my prayer and my friend would be saved. I also knew that I could go to my car and it would start. And I knew that my friend would be home.

I knew that God had frustrated all my efforts to do for Him in order that I would learn that ***there are no limitations to the power of prayer.***

*There are no limitations
to the power of prayer.*

My car started at the first turn of the key and I arrived to find my friend at home. Why was he home from work in the middle of the day? Because at the very moment I was weeping for him with God's burden, he fell under such conviction at work that he began to cry. He became so burdened for his soul he had to leave work to go home. He was shocked to see that God had sent me to share Christ with him. Thank God he was saved.

I discovered that day my limitations had shut me up to God. You perhaps have heard others say when they have done all they can do, "*Well, there's nothing left to do but pray.*" Oh, that we might learn that prayer should not be the last resort but our first resort. I was amazed that I could kneel in prayer in my home and not be limited by time, distance, or resources. I wish I could tell you this experience became the pattern of my life. It did not. Even today I still find myself rushing off to do something for God while I pray, "*Lord, please bless it.*" We are such slow learners. Thank God I have at times seen Him accomplish through prayer what I could not, but on too many occasions it has come when I have rowed long against contrary winds and the power of prayer became a last resort.

The Privilege of Prayer

- Our Father knows our needs before we ask. ¹⁵⁴
- We are invited to ask. ¹⁵⁵
- We are to pray in Jesus' name. ¹⁵⁶
- We are to abide in Christ and our asking will be according to His Word. ¹⁵⁷
- We are to ask according to His will. ¹⁵⁸
- We are not to ask with wrong motives. ¹⁵⁹
- We are to pray fervently. ¹⁶⁰
- We are to pray persistently. ¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁴ Matthew 6:8

¹⁵⁵ Matthew 7:7

¹⁵⁶ John 16:24

¹⁵⁷ John 15:7-8

¹⁵⁸ 1 John 5:14

¹⁵⁹ James 4:2

¹⁶⁰ James 5:16

¹⁶¹ Luke 18:7

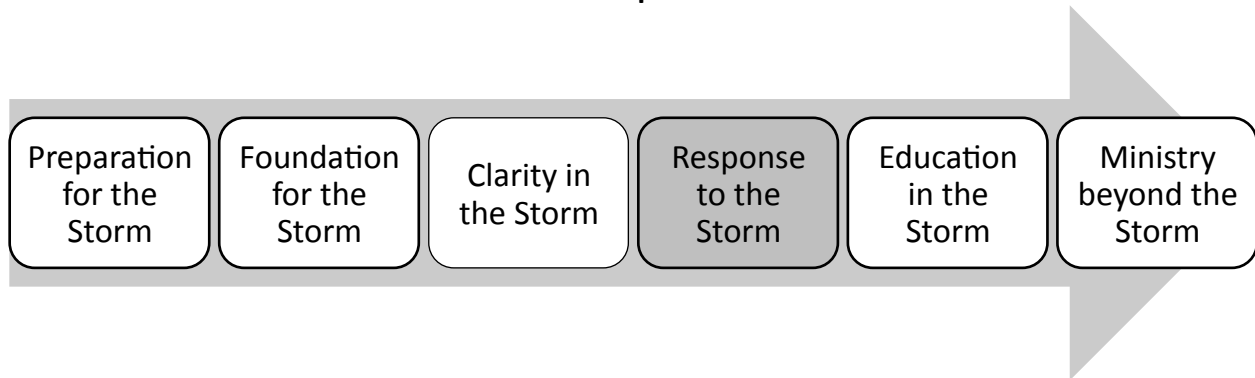


Time for Reflection

This chapter ended with a list of eight privileges of prayer. Look up each reference and write one thought of application to your life from each statement.

- Our Father knows our needs before we ask. (Matt. 6:8)
- We are invited to ask. (Matt. 7:7)
- We are to pray in Jesus' name. (John 16:24)
- We are to abide in Christ and our asking will be according to His Word. (John 15:7-8)
- We are to ask according to His will. (1 John 5:14)
- We are not to ask with wrong motives. (James 4:2)
- We are to pray fervently. (James 5:16)
- We are to pray persistently. (Luke 18:7)

Chapter 21 – Jesus Expects Us to Rest in Storms
SECTION FOUR – Response to the Storm



Resting Secure – or Rowing Harder?

And He saw them toiling in rowing; for the wind was contrary unto them (Mark 6:48).

It's an inclination that many of us have: when the winds blow harder we automatically row harder. When the winds are against us, we do not give up. We try harder and harder to beat the wind.

I have come to the conclusion that here are three possible reactions we can have to a storm:

- **We quit.** We give up in frustration and just don't try any more.
- **We try harder.** There are many Christians who have faced storms, stresses and pressures that would sink many others – but somehow these people just keep rowing. They have seen others quit out of exhaustion as they were overwhelmed by the contrary winds. But not these self-sufficient individuals. For them, it is all about self-effort and survival. In the first storm, Jesus was asleep on a pillow in the boat. In the second storm, the disciples just kept rowing harder and harder. What a contrast!

They have not yet learned that **our strength can be our weakness with God** and **our weakness can be our strength**. The lesson that the disciples had to learn in their ministry is that those who follow Jesus will always be pressed beyond measure. They experienced this on the shore when the needs of the multitudes pressed them to the point that they had no down time. They did not have enough food to feed the multitude, nor did they have enough emotion and love to continue to minister to the people. "Send them away" was their solution. But it was in direct conflict with Jesus' plan. The disciples and Jesus were operating on different levels.

- **We run to Jesus.** God's object is to use storms not as stumbling blocks, but as stepping-stones to move us to a higher plane of faith. The lesson of the first storm was to rest in

storms, not to row in storms. It was to exercise faith in storms and not fear. We must remember that Jesus is bringing His disciples to the point that they can operate not by their limited power, wisdom, and ability, but by God's unlimited resource. As long as they walk as men there will always be winds that are too powerful to row against. If we walk in our own strength, we can only sail when the weather is good. We will never tap into the bountiful supply of God. One of our goals is to come to the point that we understand the principle of rest.

To a generation tired of the religious burden put on them by the Pharisees, Jesus said, *"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light"* (Matthew 11:28-30).

It seems strange but the stronger we are in our religious passion, the longer we row. The weaker we are against the trials, the quicker we are to cry out to God. The weaker ones have understood the limits of human effort. *"Lord, I can't pastor this church."* *"Lord, I can't teach this class."* *"Lord, I can't deal with these people."* *"Lord, I can't take the pressure anymore."* Those who admit their weakness are the first to experience God's grace and to be strengthened in the inner person.

None of us are strong enough to face all that life will throw at us. At this point of weakness we can quit in discouragement or, in faith, surrender to the indwelling Christ to do through us what we could not do.

During my college days there were several of us young men who dedicated our lives to the gospel ministry. Looking back over the years since, it seems that those who were the most gifted left the ministry, while the weakest of the group continued to serve Jesus faithfully. Our strength is often our weakness with God, and our weakness is often the means that God uses to magnify His strength.

Thank God for storms that push us beyond our ability and bring us to the end of ourselves that we might experience His mighty power working through us. This is the place of rest that God would have all of His children come to. Rest is not the absence of resistance, but using the resistance to help us rely on God.

Early in my ministry my zeal often carried me beyond my knowledge or maturity level. One time I was on an extended fast, thinking that fasting would help me experience the power of God. I was weak and faint and I prayed, *"Lord, I need to hear from you."* In those days I was still looking to *"feel God in my emotions,"* rather than have the Holy Spirit enlighten me through the Word. Fasting had left me weak, but I continued because I wanted to *"experience the power of God."* I lay on the floor face down with my head in my Bible crying out to God for His power. I then read these words in Isaiah 40:28-31,

Have you not known? Have you not heard? The everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, neither faints nor is weary. His understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the weak, and to those who have no might He increases strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall, but those who wait on the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.

As soon as I read those words, I stopped fighting. I stopped trying to be strong for God. I was tired and I confessed that I did not have any strength left to serve God. So I exercised faith and trusted God from the understanding of His Word. It was at that point I experienced rest. His yoke was easy and His burden light.

The eagle has the ability to use the wind to lift him rather than using all his strength to fight against the wind. It was Major Ian Thomas in his book, *The Exchanged Life*, who pointed out that the phrase “shall renew their strength” could be translated “shall exchange their strength.”

The Exchanged Life

This is what God wants to teach us. We are to grow weak in our strength that we might exercise faith and appropriate the power of the Holy Spirit working through us. The exchanged life is our

We are to grow weak in our strength that we might exercise faith and appropriate the power of the Holy Spirit working through us.

portion and rest. It is our emotional love exchanged for His love. It is our emotional joy exchanged for His joy. It is our emotional peace exchanged for His peace. This is how we rest in storms.

It is our nature to use our own wisdom until we face a storm or contrary wind too strong for us. It may take such a contrary wind to get us to exchange our wisdom for God’s. Once contrary winds prove how weak we really are in producing eternal fruit, we will no longer spend all our time rowing for new ideas, programs, gimmicks, and hype. We will learn to wait before God in His Word and in prayer until we receive His wisdom.

Feeling Helpless

We keep trying to get out of those situations that make us feel helpless and dependent. Yet, God keeps leading us into those situations where we will have no strength. I know that we cannot judge success in ministry by numbers ... but suppose a pastor and his church have many professions of faith and baptisms in one year, leading all churches in their association. That pastor is pleased with such “success.” However, what would it be like if that pastor reached the

end of his strength and discovered God's strength and power for his church? Could it be that they might have had many more professions of faith and baptisms?

We must consider not only what we can do in our strength. We must consider what God could have done in our weakness by His strength.

A Word to the Strong

You may be strong enough to battle trials and endure unbelievable pressures. You may be a strong pastor, deacon, or church member. You minister long hours. You preach and teach and win people to Christ. Your people marvel at your strength. Be careful that your strength does not become your weakness in ministry. You cannot serve in your own strength forever. Nor can the majority of Christians find comfort in following your example. If they do not have your strength, they cannot follow you in tough circumstances. They are only prepared for the good times. They may need to see your weakness in order to discover the exchanged life of resting in Jesus. Storms are designed by God not for us to manifest our strength but to display His strength. Trials of life are designed by God for us to exercise faith and exchange our efforts for His power.

A few years ago I was so busy in pastoring that I began to neglect my private time with God. My relationship with Him began to suffer. I was also frustrated because I had carried the burden for this book since 1987 and could not finish it. How could I pastor and work on this book at the same time? I had told God that I was not a writer, but the burden persisted.

It was Sunday night just before I was to preach. In my Bible was a card from a woman who I respected. I read her card and it broke my heart. Here is a portion of her note:

Dear Truman, I want to tell you about a toy I found at the Christian Bookstore, a puzzle really. This puzzle consists of two nails twisted together in such a way that it seems impossible to take them apart. The harder you pull, the more you twist and turn and the more force you put into separating the nails, the more impossible it becomes. The trick is to gently line the nails up in the same direction, then just let go. They fall apart as easily as a warm knife goes through butter! I tell you all this because I feel you are very burdened lately. I know only a small part of the details of what is happening in our church, but, even the little I know must be overwhelming for a pastor. Truman ... Just let go! Remember what God has called you to do, line yourself up in the same direction with Him and let go of the rest.

I know you want our church to grow, our people to mature. Truman, please take the pressure off yourself. Get back to your love relationship with Jesus and let the Holy Spirit do the work only He can do. Trust and obey, He'll do the rest. The Holy Spirit has used you to speak to me more times than I can count. You are always there for my family and me. I am sorrowed to see the huge burden you are under. Please pray about what I have said and let God tell you if it is right or wrong. I will be praying for you and your family as always.

Her note affected me so much that I could not speak. All I could do was stand behind the pulpit and weep. God reproved me through that note. I stood before our people crying like a big baby. To an outsider I would have appeared weak and humiliated. I certainly didn't appear to be a strong leader. But our people saw my weakness and encouraged me. I made a renewed commitment to my private time with Jesus, stopped rowing against contrary winds, and began to experience His rest.

More Average People

Remember that there are many more average and weak people in our churches than there are rare, gifted, and charismatic people. Too often, a successful pattern is held up to our people that is beyond their ability to reach or duplicate. They feel that they are not great. Therefore they feel they cannot do great things for God.

The gifted and charismatic leader often attracts the most successful people to himself. He is able to accomplish more because he is stronger and has more skills. Perhaps many of those who consider themselves below average are not challenged to do great things because they feel even their very best could not measure up to these gifted people.

The strong need a contrary wind that is stronger than they are to show the rest of the church that they, too, are weak. This humbling experience will benefit the strong and the weak, if they see someone do more than row harder against contrary winds.

A Rest for the People of God

After trying to minister to the American Indians, John Wesley gave up and returned to England. He said on his return voyage that he had come to convert the Indians, but no one had ever converted him. When he arrived back in England he read a portion of Scripture from Romans and then understood Christ's finished work of salvation. That was the day he entered God's rest in salvation.

Martin Luther was a dedicated Catholic priest. He worked long and hard to make himself right with God by his own self-effort. It was not until he finally understood the Gospel, that *"the righteous shall live by faith,"* that he abandoned his own efforts for salvation and entered God's rest of salvation.

Both of these men rowed against the contrary winds of the law and could not find salvation until they came to the point that *"they ceased from their own works, as God did from his."*¹⁶²

Salvation is attained not by self-effort but by entering His rest. It is not by trying harder but by trusting Jesus and His finished work on our behalf. You must understand that you were not saved until you ceased from trying to save yourself. You could not trust any of your own actions

¹⁶² Hebrews 4:10

to please God, but only what Jesus has already done in your behalf. You could not trust church membership, baptism, sacraments, changed behavior, or your own promises to God to save you. You had to come to the point of acceptance that you could do nothing, pay nothing, and promise nothing. All you could do was to trust the Lord Jesus.¹⁶³

Salvation is attained not by self-effort but by entering His rest. It is not by trying harder but by trusting Jesus and His finished work on your behalf.

A Rest in Sanctification

How will you enter rest as a believer facing the storms of life? Not by rowing harder but by believing His promise. Those who row harder depend on their own strength. Those who are growing in faith pray more and row less. We are not saved by our works. But with a new heart, those who are saved will manifest good works.

When I was a small boy, my friend came to me with something called a Chinese handcuff. It was a small, light, flexible tube with both ends open. The flexible tube was woven together with what seemed to be bamboo shoots. He said, *"I bet you can't put one finger in each end and then pull them out."* I thought my friend's challenge was easy. I put both index fingers in the flexible tube and then made the mistake of trying to pull them out with great force. The harder I pulled, the tighter the flexible tube gripped my fingers. I was locked in this little vice.

Over the years, I have looked back on that experience, and remembered that the way of freedom was not by my struggling but by resting. I have used that experience many times to describe an aspect of salvation and victory in the Christian life.

When we are first brought under the conviction of the Holy Spirit and feel the weight of our sins, we try to free ourselves by pulling harder and trying harder to make ourselves right with God. Trying harder to keep the law only tightens its demands on us.

There is a way that seems right unto us, but the Scripture says "the ends thereof are the ways of death." It seems right that if we try harder to please God, then our chances of going to Heaven are improved. However, only by revelation from God's Word will we be able to relax from self-righteousness and cease from our own works and receive His imputed righteousness by faith alone.

What is true of salvation is true for our daily lives. The way of victory over the discouragement that envelops us is not by trying to be stronger and happy. It is by acknowledging our weakness and resting in the joy of the Lord. We must learn that our emotions will rise and fall with the

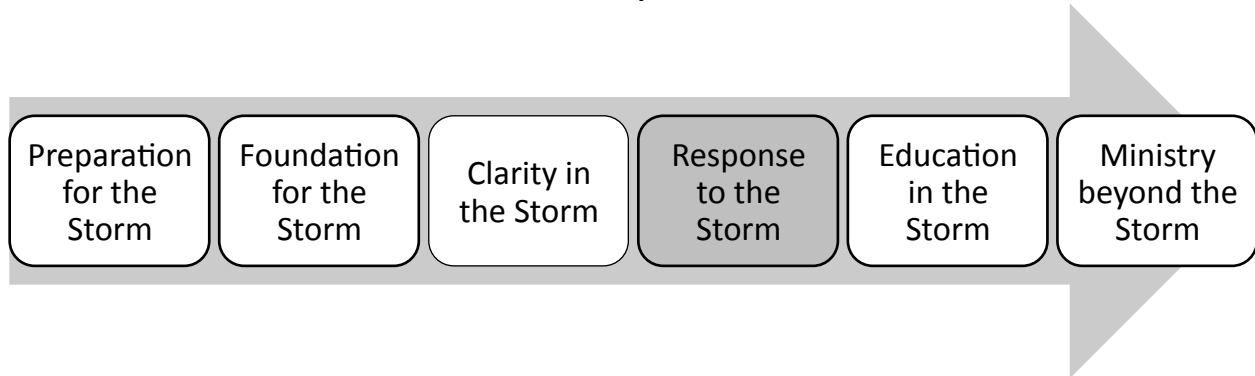
¹⁶³ Romans 4:4-5

circumstances. We will always struggle until we learn the secret of resting in Christ in the middle of our trials.

So very simply, here's our life-lesson for this chapter:

When we are weak, He is strong. Exchange your weakness for His strength. Do it today.

Chapter 22 – Jesus Expects Us to Know the Scriptures before the Storms
SECTION FOUR – Response to the Storm



The Perfect Teacher

Jesus was the perfect teacher. As the disciples walked with Him, they saw the perfect knowledge He had of the Scripture. But it was different from the head-knowledge of the Pharisees. It was a real knowledge, based on life and reality and His relationship with the Father. God had commanded the fathers to teach their children the Scriptures. *“You shall teach them to your children, speaking of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up”* (Deuteronomy 11:19).

What the fathers did not do, Jesus did. When the disciples sat in a house, Jesus taught the Bible. When they walked the many roads of Israel, Jesus taught the Bible. When they were preparing to end their day with sleep, Jesus taught the Bible. When they awoke from a night of rest, Jesus taught the Bible.

Jesus taught the Bible because He expected His followers to know the Bible. Joshua 1:8 talks about one of the keys to a successful life when it says, *“This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.”*

*The Bible was not given to tease our
intellects, but to transform our personalities.*

When Jesus began His public ministry, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day and read Isaiah 61:1-2.

The spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; (2) To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, . . . (Isaiah 61:1-2).

After reading this prophetic Word spoken by Isaiah, Jesus went about to fulfill that very Word and declared that this day this scripture is fulfilled in Him.

Jesus healed a man who had an infirmity for thirty-eight years. Because He did so on the Sabbath day, the leaders of Israel reprovved the man and condemned Jesus for healing on the Sabbath day.¹⁶⁴ Had they known the Scriptures they would have not sought to kill Jesus but they would have bowed and confessed Jesus was indeed the Messiah.

It was in this setting that Jesus reprovved the leaders of Israel. He said, *“You search the Scriptures; for it is in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me.”*¹⁶⁵ If Israel had only searched the Scriptures, they would have recognized Jesus as the Messiah. Had the leaders of Israel honestly searched the Scriptures and believed the Scriptures, they would have recognized the one to whom Moses pointed.

Have Ye Not Read

The disciples had seen Jesus rebuke Israel time and time again for not knowing the Scriptures. This certainly amplified to the disciples that **Jesus expected His followers to know the Scriptures**. In Matthew 22:29 Jesus reproves the Sadducees saying, “Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God.” The fact that Jesus expected Israel and His followers to know the Scriptures is amplified when Jesus would say, **“Have you not read?”** This little phrase, **“Have you not read?”** becomes a rebuke to us as well. For it amplifies the great expectation that God has for each of us to know the Scriptures.

When the leaders of Israel rebuked the disciples for plucking ears of corn on the Sabbath, Jesus responded with a rebuke in Matthew 12:3-5.

*³ But He said to them, **“Have you not read** what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him: ⁴ how he entered the house of God and ate the showbread which was not lawful for him to eat, nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests? ⁵ Or **have you not read** in the law that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath, and are blameless? (Matthew 12:3-5)*

God expected Israel to know the Scriptures. Had the leaders of Israel known the Scriptures, they would have recognized there in the cornfield on the Sabbath day was one greater than both the temple and the Sabbath. **“Have you not read”** became the epitaph of many blinded hearts that died without hope because they refused to believe the Scriptures.

Notice how a certain situation of life finds its answer in Scripture. When the Pharisees asked about the subject of divorce Jesus again answered in Matthew 19:4. *“And he answered and*

¹⁶⁴ John 5:1-16

¹⁶⁵ John 5:39

said unto them. **Have you not read**, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female” (Matthew 19:4).

Jesus amplifies the expectation He has of all men to know the Scriptures in Psalms 118:22 by again asking that piercing question **“Have you not read this Scripture?”** Applying Psalms 118:22 to Himself, *“The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner.”*

Jesus expected His disciples to read the Scriptures, to meditate on Scripture, to pray for God to open their hearts to understand the Scriptures, to believe and obey the Scriptures. Had the disciples fulfilled this expectation of Jesus, no storm would have caught them by surprise. Not only would they have been prepared for the first and second storms through which Jesus sent His disciples, but they would have been prepared for the great storm in which they would see the Messiah arrested, ridiculed, persecuted, abused, beaten, unjustly tried, condemned and then marched through the streets as a common criminal to be mocked and placed on the cruel Roman cross and there crucified naked before the world. Had they remembered even the words of Jesus spoken only a few days prior, they would have been well prepared for this storm.

The Scriptures Prepare Us for our Storms

Jesus prepared the disciples for their storm by His plain teaching of Scripture about His death and resurrection. He expected them to know the Scriptures. They failed in the storm because they did not know them. And like the disciples, we can trace our failures to that same ignorance.

Every problem that we have is related in a direct ratio to our love of Scripture, knowledge of Scripture, belief and obedience to Scripture. There is not a situation in our life that we have ever faced or will face that Scripture does not address.

- Our discouragement is directly related to our ignorance of Scripture.
- Our lack of victory is directly related to our ignorance of Scripture.
- Our doubt is directly related to our ignorance of Scripture.
- Our lack of faith is directly related to our ignorance of Scripture.

God is saying to us today, *“Your problem is that you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God.”*¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁶ Matthew 22:29

What Could Have Been

In Luke 24:21, the disheartened disciples lament that *“today is the third day since all these things happened.”* Notice the words, *“Today is the third day ...”* Had they known the Scripture, this would have been their day of rejoicing. Jesus had told them that He would rise from the dead on the third day.¹⁶⁷ This should have been their day of expectation, their day of glory. This was the third day. This was the day that Jesus had promised that He would conquer death and hell. But because they did not know the Scriptures, this was a day of defeat. The same is true of so many believers. The day that God planned for us to be a day of triumph has turned into a day of sadness and defeat because we do not know the Scriptures.

When you go through trials and difficulties remember the third day. There is a day that God has planned to fulfill His promise and manifest His power to us. It normally follows the day of testing.¹⁶⁸ Because of our unbelief and lack of Bible knowledge, the day of triumph and victory turned into a day of defeat. Jesus expects us to know the Scriptures before the storms of life. On the third day Jesus rebuked His disciples by saying, *“O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?”* And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.”¹⁶⁹

That’s one Bible study I would have loved to attend. Imagine Jesus starting in Genesis and going all the way through Malachi. On each and every page of what we know as the Old Testament, He pointed the disciples to Himself. *“These things point to Me!”* Incredible. And it was this understanding of the Scriptures that began to change their lives.

Jesus led his disciples through the first and second storms teaching them to walk by faith and not to walk by sight or feelings. Now they were not to believe Satan’s lies but the strong Word of God. Jesus expected them to meet Satan’s words with the truth, *“I shall rise again the third day.”* If the disciples had understood the Scriptures, they would have been decorating the Upper Room with party banners announcing, *“Welcome Home, Lord.”* Instead they mourned for three days.

Keep Digging!

Jesus rebuked the disciples for not *“believing all that the prophets had spoken.”* We should apply this to our lives as well. The reason we are defeated is because we *“have not read the Scriptures, have not searched the Scriptures, have not believed the Scriptures.”* We act as though we are in the dark when God is light. Had we known and stood on the Scriptures we would be rejoicing instead of doubting.

¹⁶⁷ Luke 9:22

¹⁶⁸ James 1:2-4

¹⁶⁹ Luke 24:25-27

Notice the pattern: if we know the Scriptures, meditate on the Scriptures, apply the Scriptures, and stand on the Scriptures, we will be prepared for the challenges of life.

Show a man a mine and tell him there are millions of nuggets of gold in that mine. He will be motivated to dig tirelessly. Even if he does not find his fortune after a month, he will continue to dig in hope. In the same way, those who love the Word of God will continue to dig and see each and every Scripture as a valuable treasure.

If we know the Scriptures, meditate on the Scriptures, apply the Scriptures, and stand on the Scriptures, we will be prepared for the challenges of life.

How Much Scripture Are We to Know?

Notice that the expectations of Jesus extended not just to a general knowledge of Scripture, but to each individual Scripture, **“Have you not read this Scripture.”** (Mark 12:10) It was not enough to know the general story of Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, Noah’s flood, Abraham’s call, the sacrifice of Isaac, Jacob and Esau, the suffering and deliverance of Joseph, the call of Moses to Egypt and Pharaoh, etc. No! Jesus expected them to have known the specifics, the details, the meaning, and the application.

Notice how Jesus found sound doctrine in a portion of one verse to answer those who questioned the resurrection of the dead. “Have you not read what God said . . . I am the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob” (Matthew 22:32). From this statement to Moses, which on the surface does not seem to be a doctrinal lesson on the resurrection of the dead, Jesus dug out of the Gold Mine of God’s Word this doctrinal truth that proves the dead rise, for “God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.” Now the disciples heard with their own ears both the rebuke of the Sadducees and the wonderful application that Jesus made of a portion of one verse. Certainly this should have confirmed to the disciples that Jesus expected His followers to know the Scriptures.

Those who dig into the Word of God will find great treasure. They will be prepared for whatever tomorrow holds. *“All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable ...”*¹⁷⁰ We should know, read and meditate on the entire Bible. When Jesus faced the temptations of Satan, He quoted Scripture ... from the book of Deuteronomy!¹⁷¹ If your spiritual success was dependent on your knowledge of the book of Deuteronomy, how would you do? Would you even survive?

¹⁷⁰ 2 Timothy 3:16

¹⁷¹ Matthew 4:1-11

Jesus would magnify the perfection of Scripture even to the letters of each word of each Scripture of each book that makes up the whole of the Bible, when He said that not one “jot or tittle” would pass from the law until all be fulfilled.¹⁷²

God’s people are destroyed for lack of knowledge of the Scriptures.¹⁷³ Bible study is absolutely essential to spiritual survival. We cannot weather the storms of life without the foundation of the Word of God. However, those who are able to handle the Bible accurately will be equipped and prepared for the day of trial.

She was our first convert in a new church start in Spokane, Washington. Years later while suffering from a prolonged and difficult illness wrote Connie and me a note:

Dear Truman and Connie,

I have spent last week reflecting over the storms in my life. Today I am grateful that I must turn back and reflect upon days past. My perspective has always been limited to my own human understanding as I passed through my trials. Only as I continued to question God (to search for answers to what seemed impossible) have I been able to enlarge my view of God. In my human spirit, this last storm with sickness, I actually experienced a deep grief over the loss of my health. Even harder for me to deal with was this sense that God had turned His face from me and I knew without His favor I would surely die. I wish that I could tell you that I was brave and courageous and that my faith never wavered. Instead, I must in truth tell you I was afraid and in spite of my relationship with God felt abandoned. I would pour out my soul to God. Lamentations 3:7 found its place in my soul as I began to relate my feelings to God, “He hath hedged me about, that I cannot get out: he hath made my chain heavy.”

Also, Lamentations 3:17-33 spoke to my heart: “You have moved my soul far from peace; I have forgotten prosperity. And I said, “My strength and my hope have perished from the LORD.” Remember my affliction and roaming, the wormwood and the gall. My soul still remembers and sinks within me. This I recall to my mind, therefore I have hope. Through the LORD’s mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness. “The LORD is my portion,” says my soul, “Therefore I hope in Him!” The LORD is good to those who wait for Him, to the soul who seeks Him. It is good that one should hope and wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD. It is good for a man to bear the yoke in his youth. Let him sit alone and keep silent, because God has laid it on him; let him put his mouth in the dust—there may yet be hope. Let him give his cheek to the one who strikes him, and be full of reproach. For the Lord will not cast off forever. Though He causes grief, yet He will show compassion according to the multitude of His mercies. For He does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men.”

¹⁷² Matthew 5:18

¹⁷³ Hosea 4:6

Even as I read these Scriptures I am moved with awe. God in all of His majesty understands how frail I am. Even in my deepest despair God remained faithful. It was in this storm that I learned to wait upon God. It was here that I learned the value of encouragement. Amazingly, the hand that allowed destruction, was now at work restoring and rebuilding. Hope began to grow ever so slowly. I spent many months trying to understand God. In looking for answers to questions I found more questions to my answers. My search was not in vain. The most wonderful revelation of God Himself was revealed to me. He became more real to me. It was as if I had been drawn closer to the Father's heart. Truly I, as His little child, had been given more insight into my Father.

I would in some way like to express what God has done for me in words but somehow it cannot be done. He has given to me something so precious that maybe it is better left unsaid. For each person that takes this journey can be assured that God in some way will show Himself faithful and true.

Your sister in Christ, Joan

Notice how this little book of Lamentations became a source of comfort for Joan. What if she never read Lamentations? She received comfort and a greater understanding of God because she searched the Scriptures.

One great truth that we have emphasized over and over in this series is that God is preparing us today for what we will face tomorrow. One of the great ways in which He prepares us is through our study of the Scriptures. This is the great dividing line between defeat and victory. You will face nothing that is not in Scripture. Every difficulty that you have or will ever face has already been dealt with in Scripture, whether it is a health problem, a relationship problem, a marital problem, a problem with your children, a problem with temptation, etc. Whatever the problem will be, it has already been dealt with in Scripture. Remember the things that happened to them happened for our learning and admonition.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷⁴ 1 Corinthians 10:11; Romans 15:4



Time for Reflection

The longest chapter in the Bible is Psalm 119. It is 176 verses long! Look up the following verses and write a short application for your life in the space provided.

119:12-16

119:20

119:24

119:47-48

119:72

119:97

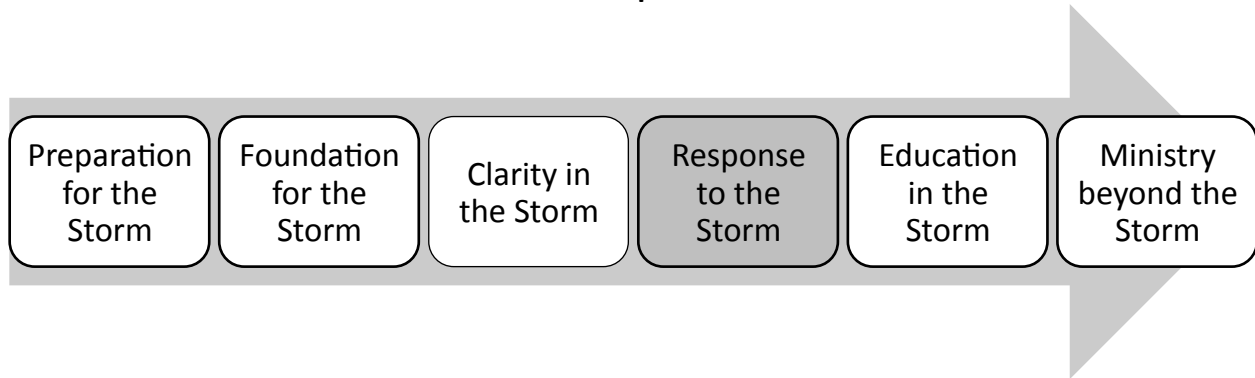
119:105

119:127-128

119:160

119:172

Chapter 23 – Jesus Expects Us to Illustrate Faith for Others in Their Storms
SECTION FOUR – Response to the Storm



The Rock Sinks

Notice the faith and the fear of Peter in Matthew 14:27-32

²⁷ But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, “Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid.”

²⁸ And Peter answered Him and said, “Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water.” ²⁹ So He said, “Come.” And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus. ³⁰ But when he saw that the wind was boisterous,^[a] he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, “Lord, save me!” ³¹ And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, “O you of little faith, why did you doubt?” ³² And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. (Matthew 14:27-32)

Peter is one of the most interesting characters in the entire Bible. He often said the wrong thing at the wrong time – always putting his foot in his mouth. In fact, there are times where it seems the only reason he opens his mouth is to change feet!

One minute Peter by faith walks on water and the next minute he through fear sinks like a rock. One minute he confesses, “*You are the Christ,*” and the next moment he rebukes Jesus for talking about dying.¹⁷⁵ One night Peter takes a sword in his hand and bravely fights for Jesus, and later that same night he swears with an oath that he does not know the man.¹⁷⁶ One day Peter stands with boldness and preaches Christ on the Day of Pentecost and another day his fear causes him to withdraw from the Gentile believers in hypocrisy.¹⁷⁷

What a strange contradiction! A man who is one day filled with passion for Jesus, forsaking all to follow Christ. Yet another day he has a hard time forgiving one who has offended him. He is bold as a lion, and yet often speaks out of his emotions. In the second storm, he is fearfully

¹⁷⁵ Matthew 16:16, 22

¹⁷⁶ Matthew 26:51, 70-74

¹⁷⁷ Acts 2:14; Galatians 2:11-14

clinging to a sinking ship, yet with one word from Jesus, he steps out of the boat and into the raging sea to walk on water to Jesus.

His name, Peter, means *“a rock.”* And yet that day, the rock started sinking into the sea.

The same instability we see in Peter often marks us as well. We should be as solid as a rock in storms, but most of the time we are weak and fearful. When the winds of circumstance change for the worse, we shrink back in fear. We are so quick to believe God in the good times, but when the trials come, we cry for deliverance.

- One day a preacher has a good word from God and is anointed with power to preach. Another day he preaches without power. It is the same preacher, but his eyes have moved from Jesus to his circumstances. He has moved from faith to fear.
- A follower of Christ knows that he or she should be a witness for Jesus and plans to lead out in church visitation, yet another day he is discouraged and can't seem to bring himself to share his faith at all.

The Sunday school teacher, the children's church worker, and every believer has experienced the height of faith and the depth of fear and discouragement.

It Is Our Nature To Sink

Peter overcame his fear in the storm and when Jesus said one word, *“Come,”* he exercised faith and walked on water . . . Yes, he took his eyes off of Jesus because of the wind and waves and sank is also true.

Be careful that you do not quit your God-given ministry because you sink when your eyes are not on Jesus. This is the nature of faith. It can only be sustained by God. The world can walk on land and do many good things and not sink. But theirs is a temporal and natural walk. Ours is a supernatural walk on water. Ours is a ministry given to us by God and it can only be sustained by faith and dependence upon God. The moment we get our eyes off of Jesus, we sink like a rock.

The difference between a temporal task and a supernatural God-given ministry is that one can continue without the power of God, while the other is dependent upon God. One can go on even when the flesh is manifested, while the other sinks at the first sight of the flesh and we swim tearfully back to land.

Many pastors, Sunday school workers, deacons, and believers in general have been motivated by faith and have launched out into ministries that can only be supported by Jesus. Walking on water requires total dependence upon God. The moment we falter in faith we begin to sink.

Land Walkers and Water Walkers

There are some ministries and churches where the only requirement is to be able to walk on land. These do not require God's support. They can be sustained by the ingenuity and strength of man. In fact, they can go on without God. In some cases and positions one could even substitute non-believers and the system would continue to work. The Pharisees and Sadducees had just such a system for serving God. They gave to the poor and needy. They fasted, prayed, tithed, and held God's Word, the temple, and the Sabbath in high esteem. From the outward appearance they accomplished much good for people. These land walkers were very zealous for God but ***nothing was done that was eternal. Everything they did could be explained by discipline, hard work, motivation, and human love. It was good but not eternal.***

Water walking is not what we can do for God. It is what God can do with and through us. When you walk on water, do not get too upset when you falter and get wet. You will accomplish more in just one step on water than you would by walking for years on land without God's strength.

Storms should challenge us to do what we see Jesus doing: ***walking on water***. Peter's faith is a challenge to the disciples and to us. Why do we dwell on Peter sinking? We forget that he got out of the boat and took a step of faith into the water. How many of us would do that?

A Motivational Ministry – Or An Empowered Ministry?

There are many gifted leaders who can build a ministry that attracts many followers without the hand of God on their lives. There are some preachers who have secretly carried on extramarital affairs while they continue to preach, pastor, organize, and move the church forward in attendance and activity. How do you explain that?

Until that ministry fails, no one seems to discern that the ministry was supported by talent, charisma, emotion, natural leadership, and organizational skills ... but not by the power of God. After such ministers' sins are discovered, some in the church might wonder how he could preach and sustain a ministry without the Holy Spirit's anointing. The reason may be that this ministry could be explained by natural means: ***input = output***. If one gets an organization moving in the "name" of the Lord, it may look like eternal things are being accomplished, whether they are or not.

In contrast, when one who is dependent upon God sins, he immediately sinks, for he cannot sustain a ministry on his talents and organizational skills alone.

Here is an important principle to remember: *activity does not necessarily mean eternal*

*Activity does not necessarily mean eternal accomplishment;
numbers do not necessarily mean lasting fruit. It's possible to
produce activity and numbers without the Spirit's involvement.*

accomplishment; numbers do not necessarily mean lasting fruit. It's possible to produce activity and numbers without the Spirit's involvement.

A weak man or woman may not stand out to the naturally-gifted because there are too many other gifted leaders. But to the weak, almost any ministry feels like Jesus has called them to walk on water. Even at their best, they need God to supernaturally sustain them.

Those who trust Jesus for their spiritual empowerment can preach one day with such an anointing and power that the Holy Spirit convicts hearts – and in one moment God does an eternal work in many lives. The next day they can preach and the people wonder if it is even the same man. But, there are some who refuse to walk on water and their natural abilities carry them from week to week with little variation. However, eternity is not affected.

We each have the potential to abide in Christ and bear much fruit.¹⁷⁸ In this abiding relationship the output can never be explained by the input, but only by God. One act of obedience in faith can bless a thousand.

*God takes our obedience and faith ...
and anoints and multiplies it!*

Some Great Water-Walkers from History

Moses was walking on land when he came to deliver God's people with a sword. He was dependent upon his own abilities, wisdom, and skills. When he returned forty years later, he was a different man. Moses was totally dependent on God and ministered with the power of God and the rod of God.¹⁷⁹

Can you imagine Moses reverting to his own wisdom when Pharaoh refused to let the people go?¹⁸⁰ The nation of Israel wasn't particularly enamored by Moses' leadership. It's as if they said, "*Moses, we're not too sure of what's going on here. We know how to walk on land, but we don't know how to walk on water.*"¹⁸¹ Responding in a fleshly manner, he would have called a committee meeting to discuss and plan a new strategy for his approach to Pharaoh.

We are at a time in our nation's history in which we need churches to get out of the boat and start walking on water. That will not happen if land-loving committee members depend on what they can do for God in the flesh instead of trusting Him in the power of the Holy Spirit. We need more than our wisdom and skill and our wonderful plan. We need less committee

¹⁷⁸ John 15

¹⁷⁹ Acts 7:30-36

¹⁸⁰ Exodus 4:1-7

¹⁸¹ Exodus 5:10-21

meetings and more prayer meetings that acknowledge, “*Lord, we have no might against this great enemy, but our eyes are upon You.*”¹⁸²

Joshua had seen Moses lead the nation supernaturally. That type of leadership inspired Joshua to also be a water-walker. When he led Israel against Jericho by marching around the city, he was out of the boat and walking on water. He had heard the Lord say, “*Come.*” Who would have thought that the walls of Jericho would have fallen, not through military genius, but through the simple shout of faith?¹⁸³

David is another example of one who trusted God to do the supernatural through him. He approached Goliath with only a few stones. But David’s trust in His heavenly Father inspired others in Israel to demonstrate great faith also. Because David faced his storm with faith, others would become water-walkers and the Scriptures record the exploits of David’s mighty men.¹⁸⁴

If the formula for serving God was only “**input = output**,” then all that David could have done would be to motivate us to have courage against great odds. We could write on David’s new tombstone: “*Here lies little David who was broken in half and killed by Goliath, but he motivated us all to do our best.*”

The natural formula of “**input = output**” did not compute with David. He destroyed Goliath by relying on the call and promise of God. The only explanation was the God factor: “*and all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel.*”¹⁸⁵ Because David got out of the boat and walked on water, others would also learn to operate by a new formula: **Faith’s Input + the God Factor = Supernatural Output**. We live in a day in which Satan has raised up many giants like Goliath. Our deliverance will not come from natural leaders like Saul. God will be calling some men and women among our churches who will follow Jesus and illustrate faith to the rest of us as they lead supernaturally.

David, Like Peter, Sinks when He takes His Eyes Off of God

The nature of land walking requires only that a man do his very best. If one is gifted and talented, then that one becomes a leader among land walkers. But the weak and average person’s best is far below this world’s standard for land walkers. Thus only a few can excel.

But all who desire to follow Jesus whether weak or strong can do exploits and walk on water. We must be aware that the **very nature of water walking requires faith and dependency upon God**. The moment we take our eyes off of Jesus, water walkers sink immediately. Notice that when David’s eyes were diverted from God to Bathsheba, he sunk and his soul no longer experienced the fellowship and power of God until his repentance.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸² 2 Chronicles 20:12

¹⁸³ Joshua 6:20

¹⁸⁴ 2 Samuel 23:8-21

¹⁸⁵ 1 Samuel 14:46

¹⁸⁶ 2 Samuel 11:2-5, Psalms 51:1

Scripture is filled with illustrations of those who heard the Lord say, “Come” and got out of the boat, and with faith and dependence upon God, walked on water. Daniel, Nehemiah, and Paul are just a few other examples.

A Modern Water-Walker

That night in the second storm, Peter became a water-walker. But it is important to know that John, Matthew, Thomas, and any of the other disciples could have walked on water that night also. God is looking for people who will believe Him and take Him at His word.

Every one of our churches need water-walkers who depend on God in difficult times. Every church committee needs to recognize the difference between what we can do and what God can do through us. There are not many water walkers in our churches today, but, oh, how our churches need them.

One warning about water-walking: be sure that you have heard Jesus say “Come” before you get out of the boat. If Peter had turned and said to Andrew, “Come on Andrew, this sure beats swimming,” Andrew would have sunk at Peter’s invitation. Peter’s walking on water may have motivated Andrew to get out of the boat – but Andrew needed to hear from Jesus if he was going to walk on water.

As a young Christian, I read of George Mueller and his ministry of faith. He had a burden to care for orphans. He began caring for just a few, but soon the need was greater than he could meet. After a certain point, his resources were exhausted and he had done all that he could humanly do. ***It is a critical point when we must choose between the natural way or the supernatural way.***

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All that he could humanly do was all that he could do. But God could do so much more – exceedingly abundantly beyond all that could be asked or imagined.¹⁸⁷ With his eyes fixed on Jesus, Mueller chose to believe God and learned how to tap into God’s supernatural resources. He became a modern apostle of faith. His journal reads like a man who made prayer a checkbook on heaven’s bank.

He cared for more and more orphans – and never made his needs known to man. He would simply pray. With each need, he would bring his requests to God. God supplied the need: food, clothing, provisions for the orphans ... without Mueller even asking another person.

¹⁸⁷ Ephesians 3:20-21

The natural formula of ***“Input = Output”*** does not describe Mueller. You cannot read his journal and understand the supernatural output unless you add the God-factor. Now the equation becomes ***“Faith’s Input + the God Factor = Supernatural Output.”***

God is looking for you and I to illustrate faith to others in our storm. Will you be a “Water Walker?”



Think back to the three Old Testament leaders who “walked on water.”

1. What characterized Moses’ life? What made him different from Israel’s other leaders?
2. What about Joshua? How did he distinguish himself?
3. Finally, what about David? What made this man so unique?
4. What one characteristic is God building into your life that will make you God’s man or woman?