

Storms

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We must go through many hardships to enter the Kingdom of God. Acts 14:22

Storms are very much a part of life. We all have to go through them.

The world's weather patterns ensure there are always natural storms to go through with wind, rain, heat, cold, drought, snow, flooding, tornados, etc. These kind of storms are part of our lives and we learn how to cope with them, and protect ourselves from their effects. Natural storms are part of life.

Similarly we all have to go through various spiritual storms. They, too, are part of every Christian's life. Today it seems as if spiritual storms are increasing in intensity. Clashes between light and darkness; right and wrong; love and hate etc. seem to be all around us. It's as if the battle between God and satan is continually intensifying. And Christians seems to be caught in the middle!



What is a spiritual storm?

A spiritual storm is a situation, condition or experience where there is a clash between the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of darkness which puts us under physical, emotional or spiritual stress.

There are three types of spiritual storms:

1. Storms to be resisted, rebuked or fought
2. Storms to seek shelter from
3. Storms to endure

Spiritual storms are all different so when we are faced with one we need to know what kind of storm we are dealing with and what to do. Regardless of what kind of storm we are in we can know that God is with us; He will help and protect us and He can turn the situation so it is for our good.

We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose. Romans 8:28

1. Storms to be resisted, rebuked or fought

Here are two examples of where Jesus rebuked storms:

At His temptation. See Matthew 4:1-11.

Jesus was tempted to sin but resisted by saying "it is written". He referred back to God's word and deliberately turned away from the temptation that was on offer. In doing so He showed how we too can resist and overcome when temptations come at us. *For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathise with our weaknesses, but we have One who has been tempted in every way, just as we are, - yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.* Hebrews 4:15,16.



On the Sea of Galilee. See Luke 8:22-25.

The storm was so fierce the disciples thought they were going to drown. When Jesus rebuked the storm their response was "Who is this? He commands even the winds and the water and they obey Him".

Storms which need to be resisted, rebuked or fought are normally temptations or satanic attacks. When one of these kind of storms approaches you can:

- resist it in Jesus' name and authority.
- quote what God says on the matter (from the Bible)
- draw close to God. He will come near to you and provide all the resources you need to overcome the attack.

No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to us all. And God is faithful; He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, He will also provide a way out so that you can endure it. 1 Corinthians 10:13.

Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and He will come near to you. James 4:7

Jesus gives us authority to rebuke these kinds of storms and attacks.

I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. Matthew 16:19. This is not an unconditional authority that enables us to go around binding and loosing arbitrarily. It relates to the *keys of the kingdom* and so applies to situations where the Lordship of Christ is under attack or threat. *For He has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son He loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.* Colossians 1:13.

Without having Jesus' authority we are powerless. We can resist, rebuke, and 'claim' all sorts of things but unless what we are saying is part of God's plan for His Kingdom we will just be uttering meaningless words and nothing will change. Jesus said *Apart from me you can do nothing.* John 15:5.

2. Storms to seek shelter from

In some storms the best thing to do is hide or seek shelter. Sometimes we fight battles we need not fight! The best thing to do is to be still, take shelter and let the Lord work on our behalf.

e.g. King Jehoshaphat was battling with the Moabites and Ammonites. He heard a vast army was coming to attack him and asked the Lord what he should do. The Lord said *Listen, King Jehoshaphat and all who live in Judah and Jerusalem! This is what the Lord says to you: 'Do not be discouraged because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours but the God's..... You will not have to fight this battle. Take up your position; stand firm and see the deliverance the Lord will give you ... Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged'.* The King did as the Lord said, and the people began to *sing and praise*, rather than being fearful. *The Lord rescued them from their enemies and they returned joyfully to Jerusalem for the Lord had given them cause to rejoice over their enemies.* See 2 Chronicles Chapter 20.

On another occasion King David was hiding from his enemies in the Cave of Adullam. He said *"Have mercy on me, my God, have mercy on me, for in You I take refuge. I will take refuge in the shadow of your wings until the disaster has passed.* Psalm 57:1.

David learned to trust in God's care, and God proved trustworthy. *Hear my cry, O God; listen to my prayer. From the ends of the earth I call to You. I call as my heart grows faint; lead me to the Rock that is higher than I. For You have been my refuge, a strong tower against the foe.* Psalm 61:1-3.

Sometimes it is good for us to stop; stand still; wait upon the Lord and actively put our trust in the Lord when we are going through storms. The best place to take refuge is in the arms of the Lord! It may seem as though all around us is chaotic, pessimistic, violent and anti-God. But God is our refuge! He is doing wonderful things in the world. We know He has done wonderful things for us in the past, and we have confidence that He will continue to act on our behalf in the future. *He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not be weary, they will walk and not faint.* Isaiah 40:29-31.



3. Storms we must endure

Sometimes we must just hang in there and endure difficult times. Out of this God can always bring good (although it may not feel like it at the time!).

e.g. Paul had a *'thorn in the flesh'* and prayed for the Lord to take it away *three times*. But God said to him *My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness*. Paul gained from this experience as it was designed to help keep him from becoming conceited. Through it all he was able to say *that For Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.* 2 Corinthians 12: 7-10.



When we go through times of difficulty and endure it can be very good for us. Paul could even say *We glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.* Romans 5:3-5.

It seems that suffering and difficulties are some of the best ways that God has of building character into our lives! (Think of people you know who have great depth of character – maturity, patience, long-suffering, integrity, Christlikeness. It's likely that these people have been through times of extensive difficulty and suffering. Even Jesus *learned obedience from what he suffered.* Hebrews 5:8).

In these days it seems that there is more and more pressure on Christians and we seem to have to go through all sorts of storms as we go through life. But do not lose heart when storms come upon you.

- Resist and rebuke some of the storms and you will see the power of God in action
- Seek shelter and hide from other storms and you will experience the goodness of God
- Endure other storms and the character of God will be further developed in you.

Discussion questions

Why are there storms (natural and spiritual) in the world?

Why do Christians go through spiritual storms? Why doesn't God stop them happening to Christians?

How can we know what is the appropriate response when we are in a storm?

- resist, rebuke or fight
- seek shelter
- endure

Give examples of different storms you have been through. What kind of storms were they? How did you react to each storm? What was the result? What did God do for you in the storm? What did you learn from the experience?

How does Romans 8:28 apply when we are going through storms? What promise is given in this verse? What are its conditions? Does it apply in all situations?

How does going through difficult times help build character and Christlikeness in us?

What have you learnt from your study of spiritual storms? How will you apply this when you go through storms in the future?