

GETTING TO THE OTHER SIDE OF YOUR STORM

by Carter Conlon

Everyone will experience storms during their lifetime. The storms we find ourselves in have a purpose, they have a reason, and they have a season. There comes a time in the midst of a storm when we finally go to our prayer closet and say, "Okay, Lord, I need to have my hands on something other than the oars in this boat. I'm tired of trying to make it to the other side."

The disciples experienced storms. The Scriptures give an account of a night when they found themselves in the midst of a terrible storm. They had been toiling and rowing their boat seemingly to no avail. Although the scenarios look slightly different in each gospel, the overall picture indicates that the disciples were afraid, thinking they were going to drown. When the disciples saw Jesus coming toward them, they opened their hearts to him and invited him into their boat. One of the scenarios in the Scriptures says that Jesus stepped into the boat and immediately they were at land.

There are two possibilities here. Jesus either stepped into the boat, and they were miraculously taken from one location to another; or the other possibility is that the whole incident took place close to shore. It was dark, they were rowing, and they were lost. They may even have been close to the end of their journey, but there was still one problem—Jesus was not yet in their boat.

Some of you are in the midst of a storm, just as the disciples were. You could be just feet from the shore,

at the end of a particular journey, but the forces coming against you have been driving you back. This is because Jesus is not yet in your boat. When you invite Him in, you are not just inviting a minimum form of divine protection; you are welcoming the entire agenda of God.

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I believe that if you can hear what the Holy Spirit is saying, you will open your heart and ask Jesus into the midst of your situation. "Jesus, you are welcome to speak to me, to challenge me, and to overturn my ideas and direction." The moment you do this, you are going to be secure. The storm has accomplished God's desire to produce in you a desperation for Him and His will. The same Christ who stood in the disciples' boat and commanded the wind to stop, the waves to be still, is now in your boat and is able to speak into your life.

■ THE JOURNEY

The Bible mentions another storm in Acts 27. I liken it to a journey in the life of a typical Christian. Paul was on board a ship headed for Rome. He was in the divine will of God moving towards an end the Lord had desired for his life. Traveling on the ship with him were many people who were not

spiritually minded. They liked the fact that they had a man of God in their ship even though they themselves were not yet hearing from God. Their lives were moving in a direction that was going to bring them to shipwreck; but there was in them a deep inner stubbornness which prevented them from hearing what God was speaking through Paul.

In Acts 27:9–11, we read: *Now when much time was spent, and when sailing was now dangerous, because the fast was now already past, Paul admonished them, And said unto them, Sirs, I perceive that this voyage will be with hurt and much damage, not only of the lading and ship, but also of our lives. Nevertheless the centurion believed the master and the owner of the ship, more than those things which were spoken by Paul.*

Here Paul warned them their journey would be disastrous, because it was not ordered of God. Maybe you too are contemplating a journey not directed by Him. If you are in a place where truth is being preached, God will speak and caution you about heading in a direction that is not beneficial to you.

For instance, we have stood behind this pulpit and said, "Turn off ungodly television. It will not only hurt your journey, it will eventually take away your spiritual eyesight." We've spoken about marriages that have been destroyed, children's lives that have been wounded, because husbands and wives will not cease

flirtatious behavior in the workplace; thinking that no harm will come from it. They come to the house of the Lord, claiming to be walking with God, but the voice of the Lord comes and says, "You must not continue in this direction." God knows the end result will only bring destruction.

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■ WHOSE VOICE WILL YOU HEED?

Then there are some reading this message who are on a perilous journey, because they choose to believe a religion they have contrived, more than the things spoken through the Holy Spirit. These people are on a self-induced and self-absorbed course that has the name of God on the bow of the ship, but it is destined for disaster. God will challenge all religion that has no compassion for the lost. Like them you have a decision to make: Either believe what the Holy Spirit is speaking or continue on this journey of your own making and eventually come to ruin.

Let me give you an example of this in Luke 10:25, when a lawyer came to Jesus and asked him, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus answered, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself (v.27)." Then the Scripture said, "But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, and who is my neighbor (v.29)?" His question was: What must I do to inherit eternal life? Or, in other words, what is the evidence that

I am on a pathway which is bringing me to the life God has destined for me, both in time and eternity?

In his answer, Jesus spoke about a priest who headed off to do his duty in the house of God. On his journey he came across a man who had been left for dead by the side of the road. Instead of tending to this broken man, the priest crossed over to the other side of the road. A Levite, who is a type of a worshipper, also did the same, passing by this wounded, bruised, and bleeding man. The priest and the Levite had built a form of religion they thought was sufficient to carry them into everlasting life, but Jesus was saying in this parable, "This is not sufficient. If the journey you profess to be on is of God, but you do nothing to minister to fallen men, then you don't possess the heart of God." The answer Jesus gave to this young lawyer is a challenge to you as well. You need to ask yourself if you are really on the right journey, are you moving in the right direction. Do you possess the true heart of God?

■ THE SOFT WIND THAT BLOWS

Continuing in Acts 27:12-13: *And because the haven was not commodious to winter in, the more part advised to depart thence also, if by any means they might attain to Phenice, and there to winter; which is an haven of Crete, and lieth toward the south west and north west. And when the south wind blew softly, supposing that they had obtained their purpose, loosing thence, they sailed close by Crete.*

There are many today who are following this soft, south wind that requires nothing of them and even has an appearance of being godly. It is almost like putting your finger to the wind and whichever direction seems to bring the least amount of resistance to your ambitions, plans, and wishes is the direction you take.

This kind of leading, by a soft wind, is best illustrated in the life of the prodigal son in Luke chapter 15. This young man was working in his father's house, but did not yet understand his father's heart. One day he went to his father and said, "Give me my inheritance." You can almost feel the soft wind that led him out of the house and out of his father's work. I can't help but think of the multitudes in the house of the Lord who have an inheritance in Christ, but they come to the Father and utter the same cry as the prodigal son: "Give me my inheritance so I may go out and continue to enjoy my life and have a good time with my friends. I am now a child of God, for which I am grateful, but there are still so many of my plans, ambitions, and dreams before me. I have a destiny to fulfill, but I can't do it without your inheritance. Now that you have set me free and forgiven my sins, I ask you to give me a portion of your life; however, I don't want the whole burden." This, then, is the measure of the deceptiveness of their self-made religion.

The father, of course, gave the prodigal what he asked for, seemingly without argument. This is the amazing thing about the grace of God. As with the prodigal son, God lets you go, even though your ship is headed in the wrong direction. Your life is moving into a place of storms and great difficulty but God, in His grace, still goes with you.

■ BEING DRIVEN, NOT LED

When you are out of the will of God, the soft wind changes into a tempestuous storm and now you are being driven, not led. You see this in Acts 27:14: *But not long after there arose against it a tempestuous wind, called Euroclydon. And when the ship was caught, and could not bear up into the wind, we let her drive.* In verses 16 and 17 the

Scripture says, *And running under a certain island which is called Clauda, we had much work to come by the boat: Which when they had taken up, they used helps, undergirding the ship; and, fearing lest they should fall into the quicksands, strake sail, and so were driven.*

When you are on the wrong journey in life, you become driven at home, at work, and everywhere you go. You are also driven in the house of God. You find yourself in the middle of a tumultuous storm and you start under-girding your ship. You read books on how to do this, or how to do that, how to get out of this, or how to get out of that. You listen to every tape you can find on the topic. You are desperate to get through your storm because you are afraid. However, there is a day coming when you will start throwing out your books, tapes, and all this undergirding, just as it says in verses 18 to 20: *And we being exceedingly tossed with a tempest, the next day they lightened the ship. And the third day we cast out with our own hands the tackling of the ship...all hope that we should be saved was then taken away.* In other words, you will get to the point when you cast out your own plans, and no longer rely on your own ability to get you through the storm. You will get a sinking feeling in your spirit: "I am not going to make it. My ship is going down."

Finally, you will get to the place where you say, "God, what are you speaking to me? I've charted a course I thought was right." It could be your dreams or your visions that you have tried to keep alive, but God says, "No, this thing has to die before I can come and speak." God has always been with you, willing to speak, but you have not been willing to listen. This is evidenced in verses 21 and 22, as Paul, representing the voice of God, rose up and said, *Sirs, ye*

should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss. And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but of the ship.

■ THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD

Paul did not leave them without a hope; he said in verse 25, "Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me." There comes a time when this is what it is all about: "I believe God!" We need to have the same faith as Paul had where we can say with our confidence in Christ, "I've stopped trying to reason and figure it out. I believe if He leads me, He will keep me; if He calls me, He will empower me; if He asks me to do something, He will give me every resource I need so it can be done in the manner that brings honor and glory to His name. If He's called me on the journey, then He is going to be faithful to me. I live until God says I don't. It's over when God says it's over. Until then I live for Him, I move in Him." Paul said, in essence, "I have my being in Him. It is Christ and Christ alone. It is all Christ; everything in us and through us is Christ."

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The amazing thing is that in His mercy, God sends us into a storm to get us to the point where we realize that it's not by might nor by power, but by His Spirit alone. We are to yield to God and say, "Lord, do you want me to go to Tanzania? Then send me to Tanzania. Do you want me to go to the Bronx? Then send me to the Bronx. God, I am so tired of my own plans; I am tired of my own dreams sending me on a journey

that you have not ordained for me. Lord, I thank you that in your mercy you are willing to send a storm to stop me in the midst of my journey, and to cause me to cry out to you."

■ COMPLETELY SATISFIED IN GOD

Paul had been down in the bowels of the ship communing with God. Everyone else had been busy trying to figure out how to get through the storm when Paul stepped out into the middle of the ship and said, "Be of good cheer, for I believe God!" Everybody on this ship must have stood back for a moment and thought: "Here is a man who is on a journey that none of us would want to go on, but he is the man who has the Word of God! He not only has the Word of God, but God has given him everyone who sails with him!"

Paul was a man who, according to human reasoning, was going on the most distasteful journey of his life. But he was completely willing to follow God even unto death, not only to Jerusalem to be arrested, but now to Rome, and to Caesar. Paul was willing to go to prison, to do whatever God asked him to do. He was completely satisfied with the life that Christ had given him. He was on a totally different journey from everyone else. Nobody on this ship could understand it. Nobody walking by their own abilities and their own will could remotely begin to understand Paul's journey; and yet, he is the man with hope and life. His course is set, he has his spiritual compass in his hand, and by the Spirit he sees the end. His eye is singly focused; his whole body is full of light. It's this man, Paul, who says, "Jesus, you are welcome on my boat, you are welcome into my life." They have Paul in a physical boat, but it is not the physical boat that is

carrying him. There is an unseen vessel taking him on his journey. In actuality he is in the hand of God and there is an evident split between the physical and the spiritual world.

It's not that Paul didn't go through hard times. Remember the Scripture where he said, *For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life (2 Corinthians 1:8).* Paul went through storms himself, and knew difficulties and trials. However, somewhere along the line, he made the decision, "Jesus, you are welcome to be in the center of my storm. You are welcome into my boat." In the natural it looked as though the Apostle Paul had lost his ministry and his credibility; but it is this same Apostle Paul on a journey with God who writes much of the New Testament while in jail.

You may not like the journey God has you on right now.

Folks, you may not like the journey God has you on right now. Initially, it might be incredibly distasteful, but if you will obey God, he will bring your children, your grandchildren, your sons, your daughters, your neighbors, your friends, your entire family, to safety in Christ. It will not just be you who will be saved, but all the people who sail with you! He will

give them to you because they will see your steadfastness in the midst of their storm; they will see a light in your eye when their eyes have become dim. They will see a rock under your feet when they are sinking in quicksand, and they will see you standing in the midst of the same opposition and difficulty that faces every man, woman, and child, ever born into this world.

You, however, will be standing with purpose, with an objective, and with words of hope to a dying generation! You know what your life is about! You know where you are going! And God says, "Not just you, but I will give you all those who sail with you! I will pour out of you living water for those who are thirsty! I will make your life a compass for those who are confused in this darkened generation!" God says, "I am going to send you on a journey and it's not going to be your journey any longer—it's my journey. All you have to do right now is to invite me into your boat."

Carter Conlon
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TIMES SQUARE CHURCH

Times Square Church was founded in 1987 by Pastor David Wilkerson, author of "The Cross and the Switchblade." It is an interdenominational church located in the heart of New York City.

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WEEKLY SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

Sunday	10:00AM	3:00PM	6:00PM
Tuesday	7:00PM	Church Service	
Thursday	7:00PM	Intercessory Prayer	
Friday	7:00PM	Church Service	

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