

SERMON NOTES

From *In Touch With Dr. Charles Stanley*



Life's Passing Storms

KEY PASSAGE: Psalm 107:23-32 | SUPPORTING SCRIPTURES: 2 Samuel 11:1-5 | Psalm 103:19
Isaiah 55:8-11 | Jonah 1:1-17

► SUMMARY

We all experience storms in our lives—those occasions that bring pain, suffering, or loss.

It's in turbulent times that all sorts of questions come to mind: Where is God? Why has this happened? Was it something I did? Did God cause it? If so, why? The only safe place to go for answers in tumultuous times is God's Word.

► SERMON POINTS

The underlying foundation for understanding the storms of life is found in Psalm 103:19, "The LORD has established His throne in the heavens, and His sovereignty rules over all." And in Psalm 107:23-32, a descriptive example of a literal storm provides insight into the Lord's role in the various storms that come our way. The scene is a ship at sea battling the wind and waves. In the midst of misery and helplessness, the sailors call out for God's help, and He brings them out of their distress by calming the storm and safely guiding them to their desired haven. In response, they thank the Lord for His lovingkindness and wondrous deliverance and extol Him to the people.

Was God in the storm?

According to verse 25, the answer is yes: "For He spoke and raised up a stormy wind, which lifted up the waves of the sea." Sometimes the Lord interrupts our lives by sending turbulence, but on other occasions, we create the chaotic conditions with our sinful choices. Our troubles could also be the result of natural occurrences. No matter what the source, ultimately, God is in every situation because His sovereignty rules over all.

There are three kinds of storms.

- **Natural storms.** Hurricanes, floods, and tornadoes fall into this category.
- **Emotional storms.** These are often worse than physical storms and include the following situations:
 - **Poor health.**
 - **Financial struggles.** Economic downturns or the loss of a job challenge us to believe the Bible and trust God to comfort, support, and provide.
 - **Relationship difficulties.** Stormy conditions in the home or feelings of rejection cause stress and grind at our hearts.
- **Spiritual storms.** Disobeying God and choosing our own way results in spiritual turbulence as the Holy Spirit convicts us. Being outside His will changes our conduct, conversation, and character, making us at odds with what the Lord wants us to be.

What are the sources of our storms?

- **Ourselves.** We can bring trouble upon ourselves with willful disobedience. As a result, we may become fearful or anxious, feel distant from God, blame others, become useless for God's work, or ruin our testimony.
- **The devil.** Satan can create a storm through temptation. David's sin recorded in 1 Samuel 11:1-5 shows the progression of temptation.
 - David was where he shouldn't have been. When his army went to battle, David stayed at home instead of taking his place with his troops.
 - He saw what he should not have seen. As he walked on his rooftop, he saw a woman bathing. Instead of turning away, he kept looking.
 - His look turned to lust, and he sent for her.

- His lust gave birth to an act of sin.

David was in the wrong place, at the wrong time, with a wrong look, wrong thoughts, and the power to act on his lust. The result was pregnancy, a continuing course of sinful actions, and painful consequences that lasted a lifetime.

- **God.** Sometimes the Lord brings storms into our lives for His divine purposes. Although they are painful, God is motivated by His love for us.

Why does God allow storms in our lives?

- **To get our attention.** The Lord speaks to us quietly in our hearts, but if we don't pay attention, He will raise the volume by sending a storm into our lives. Out of love, He reproves us to protect us from destroying ourselves or others with our disobedience.
- **To bring us to repentance.** God used a literal storm to draw Jonah to repentance (Jonah 1:1-17). Although the Lord told him to go to Nineveh to "cry against it for their wickedness," Jonah boarded a ship "to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD" (v. 2-3). But no one can avoid God, since He is present everywhere.

While Jonah slept in the cargo hold of the ship, the Lord "hurled a great wind on the sea" (v. 4). All the sailors called on their gods, hoping that one of them would intervene. When they decided to cast lots to see which of them was to blame for the storm, the lot fell to Jonah. He had foolishly tried to flee from God by leaving the land and going to sea, both of which were created and controlled by Him. In order to save the ship, Jonah told them to throw him overboard. When they did, the raging storm ceased.

Although Jonah tried to escape from the Lord, God never left him. Even in the sea, He rescued Jonah by sending a great fish to swallow him. Eventually he was vomited onto land and made his way to Nineveh to preach as the Lord had commanded. Yet even then, he resented the fact that

the people repented and would no longer be judged for their evil ways.

In the same way, we bring trouble upon ourselves when we try to run away from God. Yet like Jonah, we'll discover that He is always with us, even in our disobedience. His desire is that we repent and return to Him.

- **To conform us to Christ's image.** God is willing to break us and cause suffering in order to glorify Himself by making us like His Son.
- **To equip us for service.** Having suffered through painful storms, we come out better equipped to be helpful to others.
- **To demonstrate His power in our lives.** God powerfully uses the situation to make us more useful than we were before.
- **To reveal Himself to us.** Turbulent times give us a new perspective on the Lord and how He works. Sometimes this comes after the storm when we look back and see how He brought us through it. Then we understand better that His strength was sufficient for us and His purpose was good.
- **To demonstrate His love.** Once we understand that God's thoughts and ways are so much higher than ours, we'll realize that any storm He brings is motivated by His love.
- **To remind us who is in control.** Because His knowledge is complete, God never makes mistakes. Nothing happens in our lives without His permissive will. His good purpose, mighty power, and unfailing love always govern the storms that come our way.

► RESPONSE

- How do you usually respond to the storms in your life? How does it make you feel knowing that God is in control?
- As you look back on past storms, what has the Lord taught you about Himself and His ways?

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