

54. The Gospel of John—6:15-21

“Sent into the Storm” Pt.2

(12/16/18)

Last week we began a two-part study which we entitled, *“Sent into the Storm”*.

The Scripture we’re studying is John 6.15-21—and the parallel passage in Matthew 14:22-33.

Let me quickly sketch out the background.

The Lord and His disciples had come to the end of a long hard day of ministry—which was supposed to be a day of rest.

But after ministering all day teaching, healing the sick, and feeding fifteen to twenty thousand people with just five barley biscuits and a couple of small pickled fish—we read:

Matthew 14:22-24 (NKJV)

²² Immediately Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, while He sent the multitudes away. ²³ 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. ²⁴ But the boat was now in the middle of the sea, tossed [tortured] by the waves, for the wind was contrary.

Now while they were going through this Jesus was up on a high mount that overlooked the Sea of Galilee.

John tells us that the Passover was near which meant there was a full moon out.

And Mark tells us that from where Jesus was sitting on the mountain—He could see the disciples struggling on the Sea of Galilee in the moonlight.

Remember this was a wind storm—not a rain storm with clouds.

Matthew tells us He was praying—no doubt for them (*“He ever lives to make intercession for us.”*).

So here are the disciples fighting for their lives out on the Sea of Galilee while Jesus is sitting up on the mountain watching the whole thing unfold.

Here’s something to think about—did Jesus know the storm was coming—yes!

Which means He deliberately sent them into the storm—which begs the question, *“why would God deliberately send His children into storms?”*

A storm could be any trial, tribulation, problem, or painful circumstance that we find ourselves battling in life.

These storms often hit us suddenly and without warning (like the storm the disciples experienced on the Sea of Galilee that night).

Sometimes they are the result of another person’s disobedience toward God that winds up *sweeping* us into the storm that God has brought upon *their* life.

Like the crew and passengers on the ship Jonah was on; or like the storm Noah and his family found themselves in— (unsaved husband; rebellious teenager etc.)

I think most of the time storms come upon our lives because of our *own* rebellion (consequences of disobedience in our lives toward the will and word of God)—but not always.

Many times, they are no one's fault but simply the *sovereignty* of God at work in our lives wanting to accomplish His purposes.

Now, as we said last time, I've divided verses 15-21 of John 6 into two main parts—

I. A Lesson in the Perfection of Faith

II. A Look at the Purpose of Storms

As we read our Bibles, we discover that there are four kinds of storms that God will send us into for His purposes, and they are—Storms of *Correction, Perfection, Direction, and Preparation*.

A. He Sends Us into the Storm to Give Us Necessary Correction

Jonah 1:1-5 (NKJV)

¹ Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, ² "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before Me." ³ But Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. He went down to Joppa, and found a ship going to Tarshish; so he paid the fare, and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. ⁴ But the LORD sent out a great wind on the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship was about to be broken up. ⁵ Then the mariners were afraid; and every man cried out to his god, and threw the cargo that *was* in the ship into the sea, to lighten the load. But Jonah had gone down into the lowest parts of the ship, had lain down, and was fast asleep.

It's amazing how *low* some people will sink when they are running from God and how He has to bring a storm into their life to get them to repent and start obeying Him.

God told Jonah to go to Nineveh and warn the Ninevites that if they didn't repent immediately—they would be judged for their wickedness.

Jonah didn't want to do what God had said (he hated the Assyrians—explain) so he got into a ship and sailed in the opposite direction.

God sent a storm to chasten and correct him for his disobedience (finish).

Sometimes if we continually refuse to do what God has told us to do in His Word, at one point—He will bring a storm into our life to force us to “change course” and to start moving in the direction of obedience.

This storm could take a number of different forms (loss of job or a relationship, a sickness of some kind...) but understand, that when it comes to the storms we face as children of God—it's always done by God out of love to bring us onto the right path.

Hebrews 12:5-6 (NKJV)

⁵ And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: *"My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; ⁶ For whom the LORD loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives."*

Psalms 119:67, 71 (NKJV)

⁶⁷ Before I was afflicted I went astray, But now I keep Your word... ⁷¹ *It is good for me that I have been afflicted, That I may learn Your statutes.*

If you find yourself going through a protracted period (storm) where everything seems to be going wrong, nothing is working out for you and there seems to be one problem after another—take inventory of your life to determine if you are in some kind of disobedience where God is trying to correct you.

A. He Sends Us into the Storm to Give Us Necessary Correction

B. He Sends Us into the Storm to Further Our Perfection

James 1:2-4 (NKJV)

² My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, ³ knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. ⁴ But let patience have *its* perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.

This, as we studied last week, was the kind of storm the disciples found themselves in on the Sea of Galilee—it was designed to perfect their faith (check out last week’s message).

Jesus waited until the ship was as far from land as possible, so that all human hope (in themselves) was gone—He was *testing* the disciples’ faith to ultimately *build* their faith.

Remember, God wants to build our faith in Him—not our resourcefulness or our faith in ourselves.

Often, we fear the difficult experiences of life (such as sickness, financial hardship, or bereavement), only to discover that these experiences bring the Lord closer to us than we ever thought possible (the sea was a ‘bridge’ that brought Jesus to them).

We read how that, after six or seven hours of fighting the storm—when the disciples were sick, exhausted and had given up hope of making it through that storm alive—Jesus comes to them walking on the water (finish the story).

This whole experience strengthened their faith by elevating their awareness of Who He was—and as their understanding of His Person and awesome power was expanded the result was their worship was deepened—

Matthew 14:33 (NKJV)

³³ Then those who were in the boat came and worshiped Him, saying, "Truly You are the Son of God."

These storms are tests conducted under the control and watchful eye of God—and then only for a specific period of time to accomplish His purposes:

1 Peter 5:10 (NKJV)

¹⁰ But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle *you*.

One author put it well—

“There is a common fallacy that we often hold to, thinking that if I am in the will of the Lord, if I am obeying the commands of Jesus, my life should be a piece of cake. That I shouldn’t have any problems, I shouldn’t have any troubles. I should always have calm seas with the wind at my back, because after all, I’m doing the will of the Lord.

Let’s think about that for a minute. Let’s think about Jesus. In doing the will of the Father there in Gethsemane, as He was facing the cross, you remember His prayer, *“Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not my will, thy will be done”* (Matthew 26:39). And submitting to the will of the Father did not bring the wind at His back and a calm sea. It brought the cross.

Oftentimes for us, the will of God is not an easy thing. It many times is a very difficult thing. And I face adversities when I seek to do the will of God. So often I’m going against the tide when I seek to do the will of God. But Jesus is watching over us interceding and will come to our rescue when we have learned the lessons He wants to teach us—*“But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you.”* (1Peter 5:10)

A. He Sends Us into the Storm to Give Us Necessary Correction

B. He Sends Us into the Storm to Further Our Perfection

C. He Sends Us into the Storm to Give Us New Direction

1. To direct a person into salvation

Psalm 107:23-28 (NKJV)

²³ Those who go down to the sea in ships, Who do business on great waters, ²⁴ They see the works of the LORD, And His wonders in the deep. ²⁵ For He commands and raises the stormy wind, Which lifts up the waves of the sea. ²⁶ They mount up to the heavens, They go down again to the depths; Their soul melts because of trouble. ²⁷ They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, And are at their wits' end. ²⁸ Then they cry out to the LORD in their trouble, And He brings them out of their distresses.

This reminds me of how God used a storm at sea to direct John Newton the infamous slave trader to salvation.

“John Newton was one of the biggest sinners and reprobates that ever walked on the face of the earth. He was an experienced sailor and navigator, but his cursing and blaspheming turned even the hardest sailors’ ears red. He had one thing in his favor—a godly mother who told him

about the Savior when he was young and continued to pray for him all throughout his years of sin and rebellion against God.

*One day John signed on with a slave ship leaving from Africa with a load of human cargo. He ridiculed the moral and poked fun at the religious. He even made jokes about a book that would eventually help reshape his life: *The Imitation of Christ* written by Thomas a Kempis. In fact, he was degrading that book a few hours before his ship sailed into an angry storm.*

That night the waves pummeled the Greyhound, spinning the ship one minute on the top of a wave. Plunging her the next into a watery valley. John awakened to find his cabin filled with water. The side of the Greyhound had collapsed. Ordinarily such damage would have sent a ship to the bottom in a matter of minutes. The Greyhound, however, was carrying buoyant cargo and remained afloat. John worked at the pumps all night. For nine hours, he and the other sailors struggled to keep the ship from sinking but he knew that it was a losing battle. The constant wind rocked the boat so forcefully that the sailors had to tie themselves to the deck to keep from being swept overboard.

At one point, several of the crew tried to throw Newton overboard. They figured that God was punishing him like Jonah of the Old Testament.

Finally, when his hopes were more battered than the vessel, he threw himself on the saltwater-soaked deck and prayed earnestly—“God, if You’re true make good your Word. Cleanse my vile heart and have mercy on us all.” John didn’t deserve mercy, but he received it. The Greyhound and her crew survived.

After four weeks of storms and constant brushes with death, the ship limped into an Irish port. John Newton, former “free thinker,” former slave trader and atheist, declared his faith in Jesus. He became a well-known preacher and composer. In fact, we chiefly know him as the author of the hymn “Amazing Grace.”

*Amazing grace! how sweet the sound,
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found,
was blind, but now I see.*

Sometimes a person who feels “*I am the captain of my ship and the master of my fate*” has to be put through one of those “*life and death*” storms by God where He allows them to go through such a painful or fearful experience—that they are broken of their rebellion against God and cry out to Him to save them.

1. To direct a person into salvation

2. To direct a Christian into service

→ The storm at sea that brought Paul to the Island of Malta (Acts 27-28)

I heard the testimony of a man, who was a Christian, say that he owned a company and made a six-figure income from his business.

But one day, for no apparent reason, business steadily declined over the next few months until the company went broke and had to close.

Heart-broken that God didn't answer his prayers but instead let his business fail—he could do nothing but cry out to God and the Lord redirected his life into the mission field where he had a very fruitful and blessed ministry. (Finish)

Be open to God redirecting your life through the storm.

A. He Sends Us into the Storm to Give Us Necessary Correction

B. He Sends Us into the Storm to Further Our Perfection

C. He Sends Us into the Storm to Give Us New Direction

D. He Sends Us into the Storm for the Purpose of Preparation

God's storms are preparatory—they prepare us for the work God has for us in the future.

We read in Acts 3 & 4, that eighteen or so months after Jesus fed five-thousand men plus women and children and then the storm hit—that Peter preached the gospel and five thousand men plus women and children (teen-agers) were fed spiritually and saved.

And right after that feeding another storm hit—a storm of persecution.

The storm that Jesus sent the disciples into as recorded in the gospels taught them perseverance and faith.

But it also taught them something else—that so often the pain of today is preparing us for the work of tomorrow.

This principle will only help you deal with a severe storm if you're mature enough to see that—the whole purpose of your Christian life is to be used by God to touch hurting, and broken people for the glory of God.

And often, there is no way we can relate to broken and hurting people (or they to us) except God allows us to experience some of the pain that they're experiencing. (2Cor.1:3-5)

➔ The Erica Fye story

The storms of life can make us bitter or better—it's up to us.

“But I’ve been struggling for so long in this storm against...(health problems, alcohol, drugs, unsaved spouse, rebellious teenager...)—I’ve cried out to the Lord but He seems like He’s nowhere to be found.”

John 6:17 (NKJV)

¹⁷ [the disciples] got into the boat and went over the sea toward Capernaum. And **it was already dark, and Jesus had not come to them.**

I don't know what storm you're going thru right now, or how long you've been fighting it.

It may have come upon you suddenly, and everything now seems dark and hopeless.

You've cried out to the Lord and He hasn't 'come' to you yet in the sense that there seems to be no help from Him in sight.

Remember that just about the time the disciples were giving up all hope of being rescued, Jesus came to them—and He'll come to you too.