

Melva's Corner

STORMY SEASON!

August 8, 2005

Bible Text: Psalm 107:29 Mark 4:39

Central Truth: God's people have recognized God as the ultimate and perfect shepherd.

Here we are in that time of the year when storms come upon us often. We find that the weather person on the local news program is more important to us. If they say, grab your umbrella or raincoat we pay attention. Rain storms, thunderstorms, windstorms, tornados, storms of all kind cluster into this season of the year. We understand that is just the way it is with the weather; storms come, and you prepare for them as best you can. Life goes on.

We have had so many hurricanes and storms this year. The sound and fury of the storms wear on you after awhile. Life has its storms, too. The storms of life can really wear on us, as well. However, the manner in which we respond to these storms can be a powerful witness.

Where can we go to find a dependable and constant source of strength, comfort, hope, and restoration? When we face life's storms, is there any assurance or hope? Absolutely! For centuries, God's people have recognized God as the ultimate and perfect shepherd. Let's confess His graciousness and goodness!

Sometimes the Lord calms the storms that rage in our lives.

He calms the storm, so that its waves are still. (Psalm 107:29)

Then He [Jesus] arose and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace, be still!" And the wind ceased and there was a great calm. (Mark 4:39)

I love it when God does that, but sometimes He doesn't remove the storm.

Recently I was studying about the early Christian servant Stephen. **(Acts 6:1-8:8)** Stephen was not described as a weak, faithless person, but as a strong Christian with faith, wisdom, and spiritual power. In the midst of persecution, the way that he handled the storm became a witness and an inspiration to others. The key focus is the witness of Stephen's life: **“And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and signs among the people... And all who sat in the council, looking steadfastly at him, saw his face as the face of an angel ... and they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul. And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on God and saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not charge them with this sin." And when he had said this, he fell asleep.”** **(Acts 6:8; Acts 6:15; Acts 7:58-60 NKJV)**

The way Stephen kept his eyes on Jesus in this storm was a testimony of faith to Saul — who at this point was persecuting Christians, but would later become the great missionary to the Gentiles telling the story of Christ.

The way that we demonstrate the fruit of the Spirit in difficult times today can also be a most powerful witness to those around us. Anyone can be joyful and peaceful when things are going well, but it is supernatural to have love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control when you are in the middle of one of life's raging storms. **(cf. Galatians 5:22-23)**

When you find yourself in a storm, by all means pray that the Lord will remove it. If He doesn't, pray that the Lord will help you to be a witness to those around you in the middle of the storm. We don't want to be guilty of being fair weather Christians. In the midst of a storm, we certainly hope that God will glorify Himself through us by the way we handle our storms.

Paul's closing words to the churches of Asia Minor are our fitting reminder of this spiritual necessity yet great opportunity:

Finally, let the mighty strength of the Lord make you strong. Put on all the armor that God gives, so you can defend yourself against the devil's tricks. We are not fighting against humans. We are fighting against forces and authorities and against rulers of darkness and powers in the spiritual world. So put on all the armor

that God gives. Then when that evil day comes, you will be able to defend yourself. And when the battle is over, you will still be standing firm ... Never stop praying, especially for others. Always pray by the power of the Spirit. Stay alert and keep praying for God's people. Pray that I will be given the message to speak and that I may fearlessly explain the mystery about the good news. I was sent to do this work, and that's the reason I am in jail. So pray that I will be brave and will speak as I should ... I pray that God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ will give peace, love, and faith to every follower! May God be kind to everyone who keeps on loving our Lord Jesus Christ. (Ephesians 6:10-13; Ephesians 6:18-20; Ephesians 6:23-24 CEV)

Memory Text:

"We don't go around preaching about ourselves; we preach Christ Jesus, the Lord. All we say about ourselves is that we are your servants because of what Jesus has done for us. For God, who said, "Let there be light in the darkness," has made us understand that this light is the brightness of the glory of God that is seen in the face of Jesus Christ. But this precious treasure — this light and power that now shine within us — is held in perishable containers, that is, in our bodies. So everyone can see that our glorious power is from God and is not our own." (II Corinthians 4:5-7 NLT)