

St. Mark 4:35-41, Job 38:1-3

Dear Friends in Christ,

You'll remember that Satan, the accuser, stood in front of God and charged Him (accused God) of excessive protection of Job. Satan's motive was what it always is: destroy the faith of a child of God.

And, once again, recall Job 1:12 and Job 2:6 - God's responses to Satan's accusations. First, Job 1:12: "And the Lord said to Satan, 'Behold, all that he has is in your hand. Only against him do not stretch out your hand.'" And then Job 2:6: "And the Lord said to Satan, 'Behold he is in your hand; only spare his life.'" That shatters the warm, fuzzies, doesn't it?

Of course, what might unsettle us is who Job was before God. We're told, "blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil." (Job 1:1b) And this: "this man was the greatest of all the people of the east." (Job 1:3b) And, oh boy, God put him in the midst of one fierce storm.

Like it or not, that's exactly where we are once again headed. It's a most familiar text, isn't it? And guess what?

WE'RE BACK IN THE BOAT!

I. Always!

You've heard it; maybe you've said it: "I feel like Job!" No you don't and never have. Only Job felt like Job. However, God always has His people in the boat - for their good. I like to put it this way: God rocks the boat, upsets the apple cart, puts the fly in the ointment and maneuvers us between a rock and a hard place.

Let's go at it this way: He doesn't leave His people (the ones He purchased with Christ's blood) - He doesn't leave His people **alone**. And the purpose of His activity is not to torment His people, but to guide them and keep them close.

I've always found it interesting: Christians getting bent out of shape when something goes wrong as if they are going to truly find a course of smooth sailing in a decadent, God forsaking, violent, dying world! Do you hear these words, or do you honestly think they apply to someone else? These are words I just recently considered with you: "...if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith...may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ." (I Peter 1:6,7)

Let me ask you this: Are these words you block out of your mind and walk with the Lord? And these are words I just recently considered with you:

"...do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him (Got that? *Reproved by Him.*). For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives." It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons."...he disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. (Heb. 12:5,6,10b)

And for "old times" sake, consider this which cannot be ignored by those who cherish God's Word: "Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword...and whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me." (Matt. 10:34,38)

Dear friends, we can ill afford to live in a fantasy land about anything of this world. God won't allow it! We're back in the boat and He rocks it - for the sake of our eternity. Well, listen to this . . .

II. To Keep the Perspective Straight.

On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, "Let us go across to the other side." And leaving the crowd, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. And other boats were with him. And a great windstorm arose, and the waves were breaking, so that the boat was already filling. But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion. (Mk. 4:35-37)

Isn't this incredible? Their lives were in complete turmoil and jeopardy, and everything looked as if it would end. And God is fast asleep in the back of the boat. Isn't that the accusation some make when God doesn't do something about something we don't like? "What! Is God asleep?"

And they woke him and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" And he awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. He said to them, "Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?" (vss. 38b-40)

First, the lesson is simple, but always hard for sinful flesh to grasp. The Lord Who controls the storms controls everything. The One Who does not let a sparrow die apart from His will (a sparrow!) allows nothing - nothing - to happen apart from His will.

Secondly, we run back to Job. Everybody knows Job and how he suffered. Everybody knows he had all kinds of questions. Everybody knows what happened to him didn't make any sense - from his perspective. But, what most don't grasp is this: God never answered a single question of Job. Not one! God was not obligated to do so.

Thirdly, the similarity between Job and the disciples in the boat is most enlightening. At the height of Job's testing God didn't say, "Oh, dear little Job, everything's going to be okay!" even though God made everything better than okay. No, God said, "Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Dress for action like a man; I will question you, and you make it known to me." (Job. 38:2,3)

At the height of the storm God didn't say, "Oh, dear little disciples, everything is going to be okay!" even though God made everything better than okay. No, God said, "Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?" (vs. 40)

Someone once made this observation, and it's a good one: "Crises brings us face to face with our inadequacy and our inadequacy in turn leads us to the inexhaustible sufficiency of God." You see? Life in the boat keeps our perspective straight. Our security and comfort cannot rest with this world of lies and broken promises. Our security and comfort must rest on the inexhaustible sufficiency of God who is leading us out of this world.

In spite of how futile and frightening we might see things when the storms hit, the Word of the Lord is absolute and without change: "For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope." (Jer. 29:11)

Do you understand where that future and hope rests? Well, it rests in the culmination of David's words from the 23rd Psalm: "I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever." (vs. 6) But, listen, God makes the following promise to us through David, prior to our entering eternal life with the words "surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life." Not the goodness and mercy of this world which are unpredictable, but the goodness and mercy of God in Christ; Who paid for our sin and rebellion. And so, these final words of our text . . .

III. We See God.

And they were filled with great fear and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?" (vs. 41)

Who is this? Well, this is God. If the wind and waves obey Him, then everything obeys Him. Even human arrogance and rejection will obey God because God uses all things - good and bad to serve His purposes.

However, for the child of God it is the very Word Himself, our Lord Jesus, Who comes to forgive sin and grant us eternal life. This is God who rides the tempests with us and presents Himself to us in Word and Sacrament with every promise of His love and Presence.

Years ago, French poet and diplomat Paul Claudel wrote, "Christ did not come to do away with suffering. He did not come to explain it; He came to fill it with His presence." And that He did and does.

You might want to remember the words of the sermon hymn, "God Moves in a Mysterious Way"; most specifically the words of the second verse: "Judge not the Lord by feeble sense, But trust him for his grace; Behind a frowning providence Faith sees a smiling face."

Without question, God puts us back in the boat which is so frequently buffeted by the storms of life. But not without purpose. And we're never there alone. His eternal love for us in Christ is always present in the Means of Grace; always present, directing us from here....to there: Heaven.

Amen.

Pastor Bill Abbott

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II. To Keep the Perspective Straight

III. We See God.

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