

Storms

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Tropical storm Sally pattered around in the Gulf for days moving from the southwestern side of Florida eventually taking a path “experts” thought would take it to New Orleans or just to the east of that in Louisiana. They were wrong in a big way. Sally came in more than two hundred miles east of there as a Category 2 hurricane. As hurricanes do, it brought a high winds, more than a foot of rain, flooding, and much property destruction. And we were there through it all.

We picked last week to take a much-needed family vacation. Originally planned for May, early Covid fears and responses obviated that. Sally came ashore about 100 miles from the house in which we stayed. The wind and rain howled for days and the ocean was unapproachable. Part of our family never made it down to join us. Just as well. The house we were staying in received a lot of exterior surface damage and some interior water.

I am thankful for our safe deliverance from and through that storm. There are many who were seriously impacted and still dealing with the aftermath. Those thoughts help assuage my ‘honest dad’ thoughts of the considerable money invested on a vacation spent mostly indoors.

Trying to redeem part of that time, this message, and the lessons contained herein, were thoughts the Holy Spirit brought to mind as I had my quiet time watching the hurricane up close and personal—feeling and seeing the impact of its force. Winds howled tearing off siding and insulation from the house. We felt them and the rain-ocean spray coming through the windows. Gusts moved furniture around decks and porches like it was made of cardboard. **Our beds even moved!** Giant waves crashed the shoreline, while their undertows

dragged the beautiful white sand out to sea. Riptides formed along the coastline daring adventurers to wade in the water or attempt to swim.

The title of this message and accompanying analogies seemed fitting as I made notes in my journal. And as I always do when I write to teach, I prayed for you—the reader or watcher—whose life today may be in the midst of your own personal storms. I believe God has words of hope and encouragement for you.

Five Things Storms Produce That Have Parallels in Life.

- Winds that overpower us. They keep us from moving forward or push us into places we do not want to go like big ships being run aground.
 - People in our lives who seek to overpower, control, or manipulate us.
- Waves that break on us, knock us down, and throw us around
 - Circumstances in our lives—relationships, jobs, money problems like debt
- Undertows pull us under and drag us backward into the next oncoming wave. They are most dangerous for children who cannot get up and out and back to shore before the next one hits and drags them.
 - **Unfiltered** negative people and social media. People who are miserable or screwed up and want you to keep them company. People who want to hold you back, keep you from getting ahead, bettering your circumstances, and being successful.
- Rip currents (riptides) drag us further away from the safety of shore. If you are in a riptide, you can see the shore, where you want to be, you just cannot get back to safety.
 - When I think of things like rip currents, I think of people struggling with addictions and prisons without bars that hold so many people. Drugs,

alcohol, pornography, the past.

People often need others to help them escape riptides (human chains).

Think believers helping other believers to safety.

- Floods (the aftermath of storms) seek to destroy or tear down who you are and/or what you have built. In our world today we are flooded with TMI and self-appointed experts on every subject. You cannot process it, nor should you try, neither should you listen to people like them. We are flooded with what the media tells you is right or wrong, how to think, what to wear, how to look, what is cool, and what is not. Social media is the greatest antagonist of all floods.

Jesus calms the storm (x2)

*On that day, when evening came, He said to them, "Let us go over to the other side." Leaving the crowd, they took Him along with them in the boat, just as He was; and other boats were with Him. And there arose a (1) fierce gale of wind, and the (2) waves were breaking over the boat so much that the boat was already filling up. Jesus Himself was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke Him and said to Him, "Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?" And He got up and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Hush, be still." And the wind died down and it became perfectly calm. And He said to them, "Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?" They became very much afraid and said to one another, "**Who is this**, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?" Mark 4: 35 – 41*

(This event happened right after Jesus fed the 5,000 with five loaves and two fish.)

*"...But the boat was already a long distance from the land, battered by the waves; for the wind was contrary. And in the fourth watch of the night He came to them, walking on the sea. When the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, **they were terrified, and said, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out in fear.** But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid." Peter said to Him, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water." And He said, "Come!" And Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came toward Jesus. But seeing the wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!" Immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and took hold of him, and said to him, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" When they got into the boat, the wind stopped. And those who were in the boat worshiped Him, saying, "You are certainly God's Son!" Matthew 14: 24-33*

Calming Storms in our lives.

▪ Finding Our Faith.

"And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him." Hebrews 11: 6

(Distraught father speaking to Jesus)"But if You can do anything, take pity on us and help us!" And Jesus said to him, "'If You can?' All things are possible to him who believes." Immediately the boy's father cried out and said, "I do believe; help my unbelief." Mark 9: 22-24

▪ Remembering Who He Is.

Jesus is the Creator

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. John 1:

"For by Him [Jesus] all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him."

Colossians 1:16

No matter what kind of storm you are facing or its source, I want you to remember these three things:

- If you are born-again in Christ Jesus, He is your Savior and He promised to never leave you or forsake you. **Never means never!**
- The same Jesus Who awoke to rebuke the winds and waves to calm the storm as the terrified disciples cried out in fear can and will rebuke that which is causing the storms in your life if you will trust Him to do so. Or He will hold you through the storms.
- And when you have taken your eyes off Jesus, even for a moment, and begin to sink into the waves of your storm, He will reach down and pull you up just as He did Peter whose faith was no greater than ours but whose fear was just like ours.

Stand firm on His foundation, under the shelter of His wings, and He will guide you safely Home. On that you can depend. You do not have to take my word for it. You have His promise!

For Christ's sake,

Walter