



THE EXHORTER

“And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.” Acts 2:40

The Palmer Road church of Christ, Westland, Mi. (prchurchofchrist.org)

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Jump Start # 3901

Mark 4:37-38 *"And there arose a fierce gale of wind, and the 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?'"*

This section of Mark takes us to a very scary scene. A violent storm was filling the boat with water and the disciple's hearts with fear. I used this passage recently in teaching a class about "Seasons of Depression." I was asked to teach this. There are times when a person struggles to attend worship services. Reading the Bible is hard to do. Fear and doubt fills our hearts. We know that this is not where God wants us to be, but here we are. What to do?

For those who have never journeyed down those dark valleys of discouragement and depression, it's hard to understand. We tell those who are struggling, "Snap out of it." They'd love to, but it's not that easy. We hand them a verse, like a prescription that is supposed to cure all and fix all. But it doesn't. There are many layers and levels of discouragement and depression. One must understand that they are not a bad person because of this. Paul was depressed (2 Cor 7:5-6). There are times when medicine is necessary. But medicine doesn't cure all nor fix all. Medicine doesn't take care of the causes of discouragement and depression. We need faith.

There are many, many reasons why discouragement and depression comes. Some are internal and others are external. For some, this dark valley is a long, long journey. And, what we have to do sometimes is push ourselves through it. Sometimes you lay down when you are not sleepy because you know you need rest. Sometimes a person has to eat even though they aren't very hungry because they know they need to eat. And, there are times when we must work through things when we don't feel like it.

Our passage from Mark four reveals seven truths that help us navigate the storms of life. Interestingly, the disciples ask Jesus, "Do you not CARE?" They didn't ask Him to stop the storm. They didn't ask if He'd ever seen anything like this. CARE—and that's at the core of where discouragement and depression lie. No one seems to care. Alone, isolated and empty, the discouraged can leave church services hurting and needing help.

(OVER)

The Seven Steps through the Storms:

1. Storms come. They always do. God tests our faith (Jas 1:2-4).
2. Storms can last a long time. For some, a lifetime.
3. Great men get scared. Peter thought they were going to die.
4. Faith makes all the difference. Worry sees the storm. Faith sees the Lord.
5. Jesus is there even when we can't see Him. Never does He leave us alone.
6. God is greater than the storm. He has proven this over and over.
7. The storm eventually ends.

From this, here are some thoughts that we need to keep before us:

First, attend when you don't feel like it. You need the Lord and you need God's people.

Second, know that God has not given up on you. Others may have, but the Lord hasn't.

Third, believe the sun will shine again. It's hard to understand that in the midst of a storm.

Fourth, take care of yourself. Depressed Elijah was told to eat and get about the work of God.

Fifth, allow yourself to be encouraged by others. Don't shut people out of your life. When Paul was depressed, God did not take away the problems. Instead, He sent Titus. Titus was Heaven's help.

Sixth, believe what the Scriptures teach. You know the verses. Trust them. Believe them.

Seventh, Heaven won't be like this. There will be no storms in Heaven.

I'd recommend you print this Jump Start and keep it in a safe place. There may be a day that you need this. There may be a person right now that could use this. Satan wants you to give up. Satan wants you to believe that the problems are too great for you. He wants you to think that you'll never see the sunshine of life again.

We need to stop listening to Satan, the world and those who don't know our God. Sometimes brethren can be impatient, judgmental and critical. Don't let that stop you. The storm ended for those disciples in that boat with Jesus. I expect that experience allowed them to face prison doors, loud accusations and the threats of death.

Blessed are the Barnabas' in our lives who are encouragers. Pitch your tent near those people. You need them.

Seasons of depression—tough and hard. But greater is our God.

Roger Shouse (Used by Permission)
