

Troubled Hearts

Surviving the Storms of Life

September 14, 2025



Let's talk about keeping the faith in the face of the wicked of the world.

My last message was called Reckless Expectations; and I opened by saying that the Lord signs off on our most devastating disappointments in life. And after this past week, I think we need to ask: **What do you do when God doesn't do what you think He should do?** Short answer: **trust.** But that requires understanding. And **that requires facing the hard truth regarding the Lord and this world.** Because:

The fastest runner does not always win the race, the strongest soldier does not always win the battle ... and the talented one does not always receive praise. [But] Time and chance happen to everyone. [So that] No one knows what will happen next. – Ecclesiastes 9:11-12 NCV

For God shows no partiality. – Romans 2:11 ESV

[Therefore] In the day of prosperity be joyful, and in the day of adversity consider: God has made the one as well as the other, so that man may not find out anything that will be after him. ... [Which means] There is a righteous man who perishes in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man who prolongs his life in his evil-doing. – Ecclesiastes 7:14-15 ESV

"For [Your Father] makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust." – Matthew 5:45 NKJ

You don't have to like it. But at least understand it – and trust that it must be this way.

The conclusion, when all has been heard, is: fear God [rather than the world] and keep His commandments, because this applies to every person. – Ecclesiastes 12:13 NAS

Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us [win or lose] – Hebrews 12:1 NKJ

And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward ... for you serve the Lord Christ. But [also, just know that] he who does wrong will be repaid ... there is no partiality. – Colossians 3:23-25 NKJ

"I [the Lord] have told you these things, so that in Me you may [or may not] have peace. [In your heart; cuz it's a choice and a commitment on your part] In this world you will have trouble. [In your heart; cuz you don't have a choice] But take [control of your] heart! [NAS: take courage] I have overcome [the worst] the world [has to offer]." – John 16:33 NIV

[So] "Do not let your heart be troubled [by the evil in the world. This is His command, as in: stop letting, or do not allow. How? Well] ... If anyone loves Me, he will keep My Word [in his heart] ... He who does not love Me does not keep My words [in his heart] ... My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. [Therefore] Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful." – John 14:1, 18, 23-27 NAS

Easier *said* than *done*. Cuz, **He puts those He loves in the path of the storms of life**. In fact, I think we'll be *shocked* to see just how *many* of the *scariest*, most *confusing* and *heart wrenching* and *troubling* moments in our *short stay* down here were *arranged* by the *Lord* for our *eternal best*.

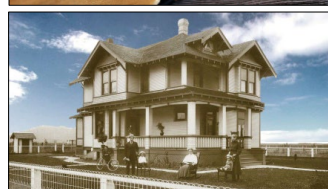


[Jesus] gave *orders* [to the Twelve] to *cross* to the other side of the lake. There were also other boats [with other disciples] with Him. As *they* sailed, He fell asleep. [And] Without warning, a *furious storm* came up [in gusts] [and] came down [in buckets] so that the waves swept over the boat and they were in *great danger*. But Jesus was *sleeping* on a *cushion*. [And when they realize they can't bail themselves out] The disciples went and *woke* Him, saying, "Lord, *save us! We're going to drown!*" "*Don't You care if we drown?*" [Not really a question as much as an accusation] [He replied] "*Why are you so afraid?*" [This is a test – and we're about to see the answer] Then He got up and rebuked the *winds* and said to the waves, "*Quiet! Be still!*" [as though directing Thing 1 and Thing 2] and [here's the thing: the waves collapsed flat and] it was [suddenly, *impossibly*] *completely* [frighteningly] *calm*. [And then] He said to His disciples, [Now] "*Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith* [regarding who I am]?" [Because] They were [now] *terrified* [of Him] and asked each other, "*Who is this?*" – Mt 8:18-27; Mk 4:36-41; Lk 8:23-25 NIV condensed

[Here's a *clue*] Lord God All-Powerful, who is like You? Lord, You are *powerful* and *completely trustworthy*. You rule the *mighty sea* and *calm* the *stormy waves*. – Psalm 89:8-9 NCV

And *here's* the *thing* too: **we limit Him by our limited knowledge of Him**. He *wants* us to *know* *who* He *is*, by way of His *Word*, and to *keep* it in our *heart*, and to *act* on it *accordingly*. Because:

Faith comes from what is *heard* ... through the *Word of Christ*. – Romans 10:17 NAB



I remember taking a *bath* at my grandma's farmhouse, when I was very young, and accidentally *kicking* on the *water*, in her old *claw-foot tub*; and not knowing *how* to make it *stop*; and *running* downstairs *screaming* for help; and grandma *being* so *frustratingly calm*, and *slow* to respond, that when she *finally* shut off the *water*, it was only like 12" from going *over*! Close call. So I *get* how they *feel* when **Jesus won't react with the urgency their frayed nerves demand**. But *then*, whose *fault* is *that*? And yet, *what's* He expect? They're *fragile*, *drown-able*, *mortals*! But **He expects us to keep His Word in our heart, and to trust it with all of our heart**. Because:

[Our God] will be our *Guide* even [sometimes] to *death*. – Psalm 48:14 NKJ

The *OT* not only *declares* that He *rules* the *raging sea*, and *calms* the *stormy waves*, but that **He alone is completely, utterly, trustworthy**. And it's such an *obvious*, *on the nose* *replay* of *Jonah*, *sleeping* during a *storm* at *sea* that's *destroying* the *boat*, until they *wake* him and *say*:

"How can you *sleep*? Get up and call on your god!" – Jonah 1:6 NIV

That's where the *similarity ends*, cuz *every* great prophet *called* on *God*. That's just *what* you *did*. Unless you're *Jesus*. Then you *don't* call on *God*. Guess *why*! Cuz **He's the One they were calling to!**

And in Psalm 107, written *not about* the boys, but *tailor made for* the boys – and for us – which they'd grown up *singing* in the *synagogues* since they were boys, it says:

Others went out on the sea ... [and] saw the works of the Lord ... For He spoke and stirred up a tempest that lifted high the waves. ... [And] in their peril their courage melted away ... they were at their wits' end. Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble, and He brought them out of their distress. He stilled the storm to a whisper; the waves of the sea were hushed. – Psalm 107:23-29 NIV



Wait. “He ... stirred up [the storm]”? Think it was *against* His *will*? And if they'd had Psalm 107 *locked and loaded* in their *heart*, they would've *woken* Him much sooner and *calmer*, and said, “**Lord, we're in a Psalm 107 situation.**” But they *didn't*. So, *first off*, they're *terrified* because **they don't know the great power of the One in their boat. So, they can't trust it.** And *then*, when they see it, they're *terrified again* because **they don't know the great love of the One in their boat. So, they can't trust Him.** I picture the boys crowding the bow, like the kid with the tiger in *The Life of Pi*. Only with something way scarier! Cuz they *ain't* seen nothin' yet! Cue the *second storm*! Cuz it's *time* to meet the *Lion of Judah*! And I'm guessing *Peter* – who *walks on the water* – had *Job 9* *locked and loaded* at the *time*, because *Job's* pretty *clear* that:

[God alone] *treads on the waves of the sea.* [Cuz He's *near* when we're *troubled*; but] ... If He *passed by* me [like *Jesus*] ... I wouldn't *recognize* Him. [Like the *boys*; and] ... If I *summoned* Him [like *Peter* does] and He *answered* me, [like *Jesus* does] I do not *believe* He would [continue to] *pay attention* to what I said. [Like when *Peter* begins to *sink*; and that's because] He *batters* me with a *whirlwind* [as with *Peter*] – Job 9:8-19, 32 CSB

The *Psalmist* had *Job* *locked and loaded* when he *poured out* his *troubled heart* in *Psalm 77*.

[Saying] I *cried out* to God ... My hand was *stretched out* in the *night* ... I am so *troubled* that I cannot *speak*. ... Has His *mercy* [suddenly] *ceased* ... Has His *promise* *failed* ... Has God *forgotten* to be *gracious*? ... Surely I will *remember* Your *wonders* [locked in my heart] ... *meditate* on all Your *work* [for *perspective* and *understanding*; because] ... You are the God who does *wonders* ... [like in *Job*, where] The *clouds* *poured out* *water* ... [and] The *voice* of Your *thunder* *was in the whirlwind*; [and] the *lightnings* *lit up* the *world* ... [so that we could see that] Your *way* was *in the turbulent* *sea*, [and] Your *path* [is] *in the great troubled* *waters*, and [sadly] Your *footsteps* were not *known*. – Psalm 77 condensed



But “[God alone] *treads on the waves of the sea*” and **speaks the loudest and clearest in the thunder and lightning of the battering whirlwinds of life.** And now, *Jesus* and the boys are about to *play out* these *passages*! So, let's *weave* it to *receive* it and *believe* it! Because, just after *Jesus* *fed* 5,000 men with a *little boy's* *Lunchable*, they were gonna *make* Him *king* by *force*. (Jn 6:15) So:

Jesus made the *disciples* get into the *boat* and go on *ahead* of Him to the other side, while He ... went up on a *mountainside* by Himself to *pray*. *Later that night*, the *boat* was in the middle of the *lake*, *buffeted* by the *waves*, by *now* it was *dark*, and ... a *strong wind* was *blowing* and

the waters grew rough. [And] He saw the disciples straining at the oars [and yet, He waits; and] Shortly before dawn [when it's always the darkest] they saw Jesus approaching the boat, walking on the ["rough"] water; [just like in Job; and] He was about to pass by them, [just like in Job when he fails to recognize God] but when they saw Him walking on the lake, they thought He was a ghost ... and were terrified. – Mt 14:22-25; Mk 6:45-50; Jn 6:16-19 NIV



But give the boys a break. They saw Jesus cast a legion of demons into a herd of swine that drowned in these waters. Maybe Legion's back for revenge! And this moment is rarely depicted as described. It was dark. It was a storm. And only the lightning would've flashed a ghostly silhouette for them to glimpse. And to really get what's going on, we need to see that John says they weren't willing to let Jesus in the boat till after He saved Peter from drowning.

"It's a ghost," they said, and cried out in fear. Immediately He spoke to them and said, "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid." "Lord, if it's You," Peter replied, "tell me to come to You on the water." [Cuz You ain't gettin' in this boat till we know it's You! And Peter must know the Scripture! When the grandkids spend the night, and I hear a strange noise in the house, I jump out of bed and run toward it. But when Shar's gone and I'm alone, I peek through a crack in the door. You want to take courage? Take your eyes off yourself and watch out for others!] "Come," He said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. But when he saw the wind, [lit. "the wind's might" battering him with a sudden frightening force] he was afraid [again] and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!" – Mt 14:26-30; Mk 6:50 NIV

But let's give Peter a break. Because everyone's always like, "He took his eyes off Jesus." But Jesus slammed him with a whirlwind! And I'm uniquely qualified to speak to this. Because, in 1980, when my grandma's house was sold and about to be gutted, I made a deal to turn it into a haunted house. But I didn't bother with ghosts. We led folks through a story of demons trying to get 'em. And we got these massive speakers, and wired the living room for wind and rain and thunder and lightning.

And we'd shut 'em in there and slowly crank it up, and the chandelier shook, the chairs and couches started jumping up and down, and then the storm would suddenly surge! And the pictures on the walls, and the teacups on the coffee table flew straight at 'em, and shattered against the wall next to 'em! We were page two of the Herald. 3-hour waiting lines. I can't tell any more, except we had to escort quite a few out, crying and shaking. And we made sure those in line saw 'em!

Immediately Jesus reached out His hand and caught him. [Like a literal fisher of men!] "You of little faith," He said, [you knew I alone walk on the waves; so] "why did you doubt?" ["What you knew to be true?" "Cuz I didn't know the wind would get worse when I trust in You!" "Well you should get to know Me better"] Then they were willing to take Him into the boat. And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. Then those who were in the boat [who formerly said, "Who is this?" now] worshiped Him, saying, "Truly You are the Son of God." – Mt 14:31-33; Jn 6:21 NIV

And this is a scary world – with time and chance and no partiality. So don't expect Him to calm the storm. Expect Him to calm your troubled heart in the storm. So guard your heart. (Prv 4:23) Because no one knows what will happen next. (Ecc 9:12) And, if it's for the best, He'll even crank it up!