

Jesus in Your Storm: Discovering God's Comfort in Crisis

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[0 : 00] Now consider the tempest and the calm in Mark 4. And you can see as the disciples loose the boat from the shore! And they pushed out into the Sea of Galilee.

They followed Jesus in the boat and they were feeling tired from the day's teaching. Thinking it was just a quiet passage over the waters, how little they knew what would happen.

We see Mark 4.37 and there arose a great storm of wind and the waves beat into the ship so that it was now full.

Picture it if you will, this sudden violent rush of wind and now the waters are starting to come into the boat and it's lurching on these raging waters and then this downpour comes and these torrents of water.

The wind howled in their ears, drowning out their cries and the sea was moving beneath them. Towering crests of waves crashing the boat and the water was starting to fill up the very vessel and the wood was groaning as the vessel filled, soaking their feet and their robes and they started to sink.

[1 : 14] Panic took hold. Peter gripped the edge of the boat, his knuckles white, his breath coming out in gasps and his fishermen's instincts were screaming. This was no ordinary storm.

This was the kind that swallowed men whole, the kind that left no survivors. Andrew clawed at the ropes trying to get the sailor, but it was useless.

James and John were bailing the water out furiously with their hands. Thomas, master! Thomas' voice was hoarse with terror. His eyes turned wild, scanning the deck for Jesus.

There, amidst the chaos, amidst the shrieks of these men and the fury of the storm, Jesus lay sleeping. He was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow.

Here he is amidst the chaos. The boat is swaying, yet Christ remains undisturbed and his head's resting there against the stern in this calm expression, untroubled, as if the storm was but a lullaby.

[2 : 26] They come to him and they awake him and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish? It was Peter this time. He was full of fear and desperation.

Jesus slept and the storm raged on and the waters were sloshing around on their knees and they cried out, Master! And a hand seized Jesus' shoulder, shaking him.

At last he stirred. He opened his eyes. Does Jesus care? Carest thou not? Does Jesus care? When my heart is pained?

As the burdens grow, the prayers and the cares distress, the way goes weary and long. Oh yes, he cares. I know he cares.

His heart is touched with my grief. I know myself he cares. For a moment he simply looked at them. They saw no fear in his gaze, no urgency, no alarm, only a quiet authority, an unshaken peace.

[3 : 29] Then he arose and rebuked the wind and sat unto the sea, Peace! Be still! And the wind ceased and there was a great calm.

At once the wind fell silent and the waves now were ripples against the hull, lapping gently. And the sea became as smooth as glass.

A stillness settled over them. Their heavy breathing was now still. Their bodies trembled, not from fear of the storm now, but from something greater, an awe.

Jesus turned to them, his voice softer now, yet piercing, and he said unto them, Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?

They had no faith. Jesus says in verse 35, Let us pass over. That was the plan. That was his word. Pass over. To the other side. But they had not believed his word.

[4 : 35] And here they are, no one spoke. They could only stare at him. Their hearts pounded with a different kind of terror. They had feared the storm, but now they feared the one who commanded

the storm.

And they feared, it says, verse 41, exceedingly. They said one to another, What manner of man is this that even the wind and the sea obey him?

They all knew this was no mere man. This was the master of the storm. And they had seen his power. And they found his comfort here in the storm.

Now, just this Thursday gone, I received a fateful message from one of our congregation, one of the families of this church. It was 1.30 in the afternoon and I received the sad news from the strife-torn nation of Congo.

My dad has been killed. What a sad time it is for our friends Nadine and Innocent and their three boys. They've been coming fellowshiping with us now for a few months now.

[5 : 45] Sometimes they walk here some 20 minutes from their home with their three little boys to be with us on a Sunday. There's an escalating armed conflict in Congo right now with rebel forces clashing.

What a sad news is it was at 3 o'clock. But that is not all. Later that same day at 8pm on Thursday, gone, I got another message.

My father-in-law is dead. These are very sad times for Innocent and Nadine. We want to love them, love on them and be of some comfort and encouragement to them.

It's prompted me to address the theme of comfort. Of comfort. How do we find comfort from God when trials come? We can't answer the questions of life and death of loved ones passing.

There's lots of questions we can have about all the sad times of life and I know people know my wife struggles as well. There's many quietly struggling amongst us with lots of things, lots of challenges and we can wonder where's God's comfort?

[6 : 56] Where is God's comfort in all of this? The disciples cry out in desperation and Master carest thou not? Carest thou not? Of course he cares.

Of course he cares. But we can wonder sometimes where is God's comfort can't we? When sad times come like the disciples crying out in desperation. So how can we know God's comfort?

Just some thoughts along that theme briefly here this morning. And the word of God tells us comfort ye, comfort ye my people saith your God.

God wants to render comfort and we see further verse 3 it tells us of the voice of him crying in the wilderness prepare you the way of the Lord. Of course John the Baptist quoted these words L-O-R-D Jehovah John the Baptist talking about the Old Testament and the New Testament the Old Testament says the way of Jehovah the way of the Lord the Almighty is the way of the Lord Jesus isn't it?

Prepare you the way of the Lord make his path straight etc. as John the Baptist said and then it reads on further of Jerusalem there's good tidings here behold your God it's talking about Jesus just like Peter was illustrating in the Old it's revealed in the New the New is concealed in the Old but we see the one of whom it says prepare you the way of the Lord is talking about Jesus to come the good tidings to come is the gospel to come behold your God it's Jesus it's Jesus unveiled in the New Testament and it reads further how he'll feed his people like a shepherd it's got to me to thinking what is the best comfort that I can give to people you know we can give all kinds of human exhortations and kind words and we ought to but more than that something more something special from God isn't it when people are hurting and grieving heartbroken bruised when it can seem like Jesus is fast asleep where's God in all of this where can we turn the Bible assures you hear people today

[9 : 07] God is your comfort God is your comfort so we centre things around this verse or two here in 2 Corinthians 1 and this is where we'll kind of base our thinking from 2 Corinthians 1 verse 3 blessed be God even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ the Father of mercies compassions in other words and the God of all comfort of this one it says who comforts us in all our tribulation that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God this is the best comfort I can give the best comfort you can give the comfort that is from God and we need comfort don't we in this fallen world we can expect pain and trouble our Lord says expect it to come this tribulation this trouble but he says be of good cheer I have overcome you can't have peace and God promises back in Isaiah 40 how they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength there's a comfort that comes from him and so we're going to look at some of these words of comfort and take heart

I trust today from the words of God the word comfort it means comfort it means encouragement literally a coming alongside to help as the Greek underlying the word comfort is talking about coming alongside to help and the Holy Spirit is called the comforter the comforter we see that in John 14 our Lord says he shall give you another comforter the father is going to give you this other comforter and he's going to abide with you forever the word is paracletos I know in some languages they transliterate it and say the paraclete the comforter he's our advocate our intercessor he's with us he's for us the Holy Spirit God the Spirit and he says he is another comforter and you can see that the first comforter is actually Jesus the first comforter is Jesus and Jesus says another comforter is the Holy Spirit so

Jesus himself is the comforter the advocate is the same word paracletos the same word comforter translated advocate in 1 John 2 when you're going to court you want an advocate and we have that don't we our Lord speaks for us before the father he intercedes for us and truly brother sister friends here God here God can be your comfort God is your comfort whether you think he's asleep or not he's with you he is with you and he tells you come unto me all you that labour find that rest in me and here's one whom his mother comforts her picture here of a mother comforting the little one usually they go to mum don't they when they're one's out the back here The dads can kind of relax a bit.

The mums are out in the cry room. Comforting, comforting. Thank God for that. He tenderly comforts, doesn't he? And even at the times of loss, even more especially, when we're grieving, there's comfort.

David found comfort in God's presence. Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me. Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort, comfort me.

[12:44] The rod and staff speaking of the word of God, we can understand. So God's presence is our ultimate comfort. And so I'd like to put to you here, really, I'd like to call it three Ps for peace.

Three Ps for peace in the storm, all right? Three Ps for God's comfort. And the first one is the presence of God. God's presence is with us through the valley of the shadow of death.

Yeah. He's with you. Brother, sister here. Who knows? Next week we could get the news too.

Someone's passed away. Oh, no.

Can't believe it. Out of the blue. And you think, oh, no. I wouldn't have thought that their days were so numbered. But all of our days are numbered. The presence of God is our comfort.

God can seem distant, but he's always close. Remember during the storm, where was Jesus? Right there in the boat. He wasn't far, far away. He was right there during the storm with them.

[13:48] And it's the same at crisis times we go through. Can you enter into his presence?

Consider the woman with the chronic condition of bleeding, a bleeding disorder.

She was an outcast, unclean, 12 long years, forced to live in isolation and loneliness. It tells her story there in Matthew 9.

This woman with this issue of blood touched the hem of his garment. For she said within herself, if I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole.

Apparently, I understand from reading the study material about this passage, the hem was this special garment. It was called the tekelet, which is from a root word, kala, in the Aramaic.

I know we've got a kala here. Jesus spoke Aramaic, and apparently this tekelet is from kala, which is the very words Jesus shouted, where we can understand in Aramaic, when he cried out, it is finished.

[15:02] So it speaks, you could interpret it to meaning the finished work of Christ. To touch the hem of his garment is to touch everything that Jesus is. The hem or the border was a tassel, and it was a certain colour.

And I read this other article, it says, did you know that God has a favourite colour? Now, there's a bit of subjectivity about this, I think, but it says, yes, he does.

Which colour is it? Blue. This colour is the primary embroidery on Jewish prayer shawls, the tallet and their fringes.

Another word I can't pronounce. But blue is the colour of the hem, apparently, and of this tassel, this border, this hem. And blue speaks of the eternal.

And some have suggested even a further significance of blue is that it means grace. She touched the hem, the border of his garment.

[16:07] And likely it was this border that was a tassel that was blue. Speaking of a prayer shawl. Blue is the colour of the pavement around God's feet in Exodus 24.

Ezekiel 1 talks about the throne of God itself being blue. So if blue is your favourite colour, I know my dad loves wearing blue. Every time we have a family wedding, he puts his blue suit on. He loves to, he loves to, it's just waiting for the next wedding to wear it now. Blue is the God's favourite colour, apparently. And blue furnished the temple curtains, covered the furniture when they moved it.

Think of the woman touching the hem. If I but touch the hem of his garment, I shall be whole. It speaks of the finished work of touching grace.

And the taboos at the time were so strong, she was willing to break all the religious and social taboos to seek healing. This one who was an outcast. Notice verse 22.

[17:11] What does he call her? This one is an outcast. Who should be to shut away. And no one have anything to do with her. He calls her what? Beloved.

Daughter. Daughter. She's beloved. Will you reach out and touch the hem of Jesus' garment? It's his presence, isn't it? That we need. We look at stories of the presence of God.

Talking of the first P, presence. As we touched on lately of Jonah. He tried to escape the presence of God. No hope of doing that. It's everywhere.

The presence of God. Don't forget, who's in the storm in the boat with you? Jesus. You can't escape him. Jonah tried to flee the presence. It makes me think there's a prank on social media, on YouTube.

There's a prank that people do where they clip a false snake onto the back of someone's shirt. And then they say, whoa, snake! And then they go, running like mad. And there's snakes running after them because it's tied to the back of their shirt.

[18:15] And they just can't escape this snake. I mean, it's a silly example. But they get this big fright, but they can't escape the snake. Brother, sister, it's the same with God. Amen.

If you're running from God, you can't escape. You can't escape him. You can't escape the presence of God. He pursues after us, doesn't he? Just like he did with Jonah.

And when trouble comes, don't run away. Don't turn away from God. Enter into his presence. Know that he's with you. And there's this sense of developing a God consciousness.

There's, like, practicing the presence of God. I know there's doubts about some of that particular book. But the sense of having a continuous awareness of God.

That actually, wherever we go, he's always with me. That continuous awareness that he's with me. To be aware of the nearness of God. His closeness. And it's like the psalmist says here, I set the Lord always before me.

[19:15] I shall not be moved. It tells about how in his presence there's fullness of joy. God is present. He's present with you in the storm, in the trial, in the test.

Recognize his presence. And the communion we can have with our Lord. Like Mary showed as she sat at the Lord's feet. And she heard his word. How can we be more conscious of God's presence every day?

I remember as a child having a teddy bear. Who can identify with that? Some of you older people. Can you remember having a teddy bear? Can you remember what the teddy bear's name was? Rupert? Ted? I'm being a bit flippant here, but my teddy was named Bruno. And I can remember some comfort that I got as a child.

And just last night we spent some time with the Burfords. And I saw Isabella and Alexander holding their teddies tight. Holding their teddies tight.

[20:17] And then I heard some mean thing that the Burfords do when the kids are naughty apparently. They've got, was it, four or five teddies in the bed? And when they're naughty and they're not doing as they told, they take one of the teddies away.

Oh, they're pretty mean, aren't they? That might be a very effective way. No, don't take my teddy away. It makes me wonder.

It makes me wonder. Can we hold on to our Lord like that? Amen. Shouldn't we hold on to Jesus like that? Hold him fast.

Lay hold of him. Will you lay hold on Christ today? Will you lay hold on Christ? Christ, know his presence. He's with you. His reassuring presence.

And when we lay hold on Christ, it's not a one-way hug. Amen? Because it's reciprocal, isn't it? When you hug Jesus, he hugs you. When you hold Jesus, he holds you.

[21 : 14] He hugs us back. It's a mutual hug. And he wraps his arms around you. Don't you want that when you're in the storm? When you're in the crisis, the comfort of the presence of Jesus.

He holds you tight. P, presence. Second one. Another source of comfort when you're going through the storm is prayer.

Go to God in prayer. The disciples said, Master! They cried out. It wasn't a very theologically correct prayer, but they did pray. When upon lost billows you are tempest-tossed.

When you are discouraged, thinking all is lost. Don't forget to pray. What a friend we have in Jesus. All our griefs and sins to bear. What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer.

Oh, what peace we often forfeit. Oh, what needless pain we bear. All because we do not carry everything to God in prayer. Oh, we can have you laden. We could go on and on, couldn't we?

[22 : 18] We can learn to pray through. That's the point. Master! Pray. Talk to your Lord. And we can learn to pray through. Thank him for his providence.

Our daily bread. The Lord's Prayer. Draw nigh to God and he will draw nigh to you. Think of it, friends. Draw from his strength. Surrender to his will. Thy will be done on earth.

Actually, that's in my shoes, as it is in heaven. Surrender to his will. Give him the glory. Thine be the glory. We could unpack so much from that prayer, couldn't we? Prayer.

It's the direct communication link between you and God. Master! Pray. Pray. Pray and keep on praying. And sometimes we've got to pray and keep on praying, even though it feels like our prayers aren't being answered.

Wait on the Lord and be of good courage and he shall strengthen thine heart. Wait, I say on the Lord. It's a bit like rejoice in the Lord. And again I say rejoice, isn't it? Wait and wait again and keep on waiting until you get an answer.

[23 : 21] Have we trials and temptations? Is there trouble anywhere? We should never be discouraged. Take it to the Lord in prayer. Pray through. And we're talking today about the best comforts we can know.

The presence of God. P. Presence. Prayer. Second. Third one. The promises of God. The promises of God. Now, you might want to check this out when you get home today and make sure this is an accurate count.

There are 7,487 promises that God has given to man. 7,487.

You might want to check that out and make sure that's accurate. But think of what God has promised to you. We could gloss over some of these. For example, Think of it.

I will not fail thee nor forsake thee. I will deliver thee. I will not suffer thy foot to be moved. I will remember their sin no more. I will save them. I will redeem thee. I will guide thee continually.

[24 : 39] I will dwell in them and walk in them. I will give unto them that is the thirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. What a load of promises. And they're for you.

Of course, we could say, well, some might be specific to Israel or this or that context. But I think broadly speaking, we can claim these as true for the believer today as well as they were in the circumstance then.

Hear his voice. Count his blessings. God's promises. We can't count them. Take them to heart. The sufficiency of scripture. The power of his promises. They are yea and amen.

We can count on the truth of them and their exceeding great and precious. What a treasure trove of promises you have in your Bible. Take it and read it and claim it.

Confess it. Great and precious promises. And there's power in the gospel, the word of God, the word of the gospel. And Paul says, I'm not ashamed of it, the gospel.

[25 : 38] It's the power of God. The power of prayer. It's the presence of Jesus, isn't it? There's hope there. The devil wants to rob you of peace. God extends peace through his word.

It's the best source of comfort, really, is the very word of God. And we can know God's comfort and grace in the present. As we've read, bless him, our God, the God of all comfort.

He comforts us. True comfort, it comes from God. Notice there's a second part here. He comforts us that we may be able to comfort them, which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.

So it's not just a comfort that we receive. It's a comfort we extend to others. We can pass on God's comfort. So just a quick few points about this.

Because you are God's comforters of others. Now, Job had some comforters. Comforters, they show us a very strong lesson on what not to do.

[26 : 47] Don't be like Job's comforters, because they were miserable comforters. That's what he called them, isn't it? And Job sought for comfort, but his friends failed him. They came and had their little session with him.

They sat in silence with him for a time, which was good. A good start, Job 2.13. But later then they accused him. And they offered more judgment than comfort.

And really a false comfort. They blamed Job. It's your fault, Job. Wear it. Job said of them, miserable comforters are ye all.

They assumed they knew God's will. We can make that mistake, can't we? Maybe saying, oh, yeah, you deserve that. They didn't point Job to the grace that he needed.

And that's what we ought to be. People. Directing people to our Lord. But for the grace of God, I could be in the pits. But thank God he's helped me.

[27 : 47] No virtue of my own. He's taken me out of the murray clay. God comforts us that we can comfort others. So think of it. Here's some little tips about comforting. And you could talk about the three Ps again.

The presence, the prayer and the promises. Being present. And encouraging others to usher them into the presence of God. The best comfort you can give to someone who's hurting is to encourage them to put their trust in God.

To trust him. And it tells us how we should rejoice with them that do rejoice and weep with them that we. How can we come alongside people? Remember parakletos, the sense of the comfort.

It's coming alongside to help. Hey, it's... I mean, if it's appropriate, the same gender, you know, put your arm around them. Give them a hug. Tell them that Jesus loves them.

Be close to them. Come alongside them to help. All right? Rejoice with them. Do we come alongside people? Or are we a bit too kind of, oh, standoffish?

[28 : 55] I'll just give you a few wise words of counsel and won't actually come and actually sit with you and care about how you're feeling. Usher people into the presence of God.

And, of course, the best place, amongst other things, is fellowship, isn't it? Where we can gather together because his presence is there. Encourage them to fellowship.

That will help them too. That we can have God's presence. Of course, we know Jesus' presence is not just when we gather in a church building or wherever it might be.

But when you get together with other people, as a believer, like-minded Christians, you can know that the Lord Jesus is present. And it's talking about that comfort of fellowship.

Paul talked about that, how someone came and there was a comfort that came. And people give comfort. God gives comfort through people. People just like you and me.

[29 : 52] We might think, well, okay, oh, the so-and-so's got a need. Well, tell pastor and he'll go and fix it. Ring the pastor and he'll, you know, because the pastor is omnipresent, isn't he?

He's so much like Jesus. He's so much like Jesus that he's everywhere present. But no, it's about all of us. It's the body, isn't it? It's all of us that we can try to be like this one.

When Titus came, he brought comfort. And you bring comfort. You're the comfort bringer to others. So encourage others. There's the presence. And it goes on really to talk about prayer as well.

Pray for others. We know the one. Pray. Keep on praying. In everything, pray. Pray about everything. And the peace of God is going to overwhelm.

And then James, pray for one another. How can we be such a people? Usher them into the presence. Pray for them. And we could consider that too, not just a glib kind of superficial prayer, but that we put action behind that too.

[31 : 00] If we can do something practical, all the better as well. And then the promises. We think of the promises. And one of the best things you can do as a comfort bringer is to bring the comfort of the scriptures.

Comfort one another with these words, the word of God. The word of God brings comfort. It's written for our learning that we, through patience and comfort of the scriptures, might have hope.

So think of some scriptures. Try to learn them. I know as a younger man in a church we're in, they taught us, I was about 15, like 100 Bible verses to memorize.

And that was a really good start for me. And the verses they picked were verses that will speak to people's needs. The gospel. Words about trusting God.

About faith. About God's care. About God's invitation to come unto him. And the best thing you can do, especially younger people, but all of us, commit some Bible verses to your mind that you can

relay.

[32 : 07] Because it's God's comfort. It's the best comfort is God's words, isn't it? We're saying, for example, heaviness in the heart of man. Make it stoop. You know, you get downcast, you get downhearted, a heaviness in the heart, but it says a good word makes the heart glad.

Verses like this one, that you can share with someone who's downcast. Fear thou not, for I am with thee. Be not dismayed, for I am thy God. I will strengthen thee.

Yea, I will help thee. Yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness. And all of those different verses we talked about earlier on too, the promises. Of course, the greatest comfort is heaven to come.

It tells us then there'll be no more tears, no crying, neither death nor sorrow. There'll be no more pain. The former things are passed away. The greatest comfort is the hope of heaven.

And of course, the best thing you can do as a comfort bringer is, especially if they're not saved, give them the gospel. It's the power of God unto salvation, to everyone that believes.

[33 : 13] So, to conclude, again, think of it as we bless God, blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of all mercies.

All compassion comes from the Father, and He's the God of all comfort. He's the source, our resource. And it tells of Him, who comforts a thousand, all our tribulation.

This comfort from Him, we receive. That, here's your path, that we may, that's you, and me, that we may, be able to comfort them, which are in any trouble, by the comfort where we ourselves are comforted of God.

Let's not just be a comfort receiver, but a comfort bringer to others. And so, friends, today, God is the God of all comfort. Jesus is our comforter, our advocate, the Holy Spirit.

He's the one who comes as our present help. And we're called to comfort others with the same comfort we receive. In this hurting world, this wonderful joy we can know, to know the Savior, to know His salvation, to know the one who comes alongside to help.

[34 : 20] And it's not a one-way hug. All right? Lay hold of Christ. Lay hold of Christ. And He'll lay hold of you. Let us pray. Lord, we thank you that we can know your presence, even in the valley of the shadow of death.

Lord, even then, that you walk with us, you carry us, you bear our burdens. Lord, we can lean on you. You carry us, even in your everlasting arms.

Lord, and we know that your presence always abides. You've granted us the privilege to pray. Lord, we pray you will have a heart to pray, a heart that prays, even when we're despairing.

Master, when we're despairing in the storm, that we'll cry out, Master, and that we'll mean that you are our Master. And Lord, that we'll have that heart to love you so.

And Lord, to know the promises you give. You said we're going to get on the other side of that lake. There was no need for us to fear or be afraid. There's no need for us to panic and worry, because you said, if it had just obeyed your word, obeyed your promises, that you'd get us to the other side of that lake.

[35 : 37] Help us to have that heart too, that we'll get on the other side of this storm. Think of loved ones, as we think of this family, in this grief, this time of grief. Think of loved ones amongst us that are not well.

And there's many, many people, Lord, that will know that wonderful presence of God, will know the power of prayer, and will know the wonderful truth of your promises, and will lay hold on you.

Will lay hold. And as we hold you, Lord, we know you will hold us fast. Even when we don't have the strength to hold on to you, you hold on to us. We thank you, Lord, in Jesus' precious name.

We pray that each one might know that heart's trust today, what it is to be saved, to know that wonderful promise of heaven to come, that you've gone to prepare a place for us, and you promise that you will receive us to yourself, we that have trusted in you.

We pray that each one might have that heart's trust today, to say, Jesus, save me. Save me from my sin. I trust you now. I receive your salvation gift. Lord, we thank you for these things, in Jesus' name.

[36 : 40] Amen.