

From Simon to Peter #09 - When Obedience Leads Into a Storm

by J. Glyn Owen

The sermon emphasizes that obedience to Jesus does not exempt us from storms, but teaches us valuable lessons about faith and reliance on Him.

Duration: 28:15

Scripture: Mark 6:45

Topics: "Simon to Peter"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of learning lessons in the midst of storms and challenges. He describes a scene where Jesus is watching over his disciples in a boat during a storm, involving his heavenly father in their progress. The preacher highlights the significance of Jesus waiting to intervene in the storm, explaining that he permits storms in order to use them for a higher purpose. He admits that it can be difficult to remember this lesson when facing storms, but encourages listeners to trust in God's plan.

Transcript

I would like you to think with me briefly of three scenes here. We see the disciples first of all entering the storm, then we are going to see them in the storm itself, and then perhaps we'll have a few words to say about their attitude subsequent to the storm, beyond the storm. First of all, entering the storm.

We have a sense of urgency according to the gospels, a sense of urgency. Our Lord summoned his disciples together, hurriedly it would appear, whilst the 5,000 men, folks, together with women and children, over and above that number, are trying to weigh up the significance of the feeding, the miracle of the feeding of the 5,000. Jesus knew what was in their hearts.

We don't go into that detail now. Knowing what was in their hearts, he called his disciples together, and he did something which was contrary to his habit. He himself dismissed the crowd.

It was usually the other way around, he left his disciples to dismiss the crowd. He himself dismissed this crowd and he told them quickly, he says, go into the boat and cross over to the other side of the lake. That had been a remarkable episode, the feeding of the 5,000, the four gospels tell us about it.

They had a very meagre little handful of provision to start off with. And yet when all had been satisfied, they had 12 baskets full of crumbs. Now when you realize that what they had at the beginning could have been neatly packed into one basket, with plenty of room to spare, it's all the more wonderful that there should have been 12 baskets full of crumbs left over at the end.

That's the miracle. And the whole 5,000 are talking about it, and I guess the women jerked in too, if not the boys and the girls. Oh, to have a man like this as king, and John tells us this is what they were after.

They wanted to make him king, and probably that's why Jesus called his disciples, tells them, get away to the other side of the lake, I'll dismiss the crowd, and with a kind of hurry, both he and his disciples evade the multitude from that point forward. Now we note therefore, and this is the point I'm getting to, we note therefore that this little group, the little group that is to feature in this episode in a storm, are one, his disciples. Two, not only is it a group of disciples, it is a group of disciples that are actually doing their Lord's bidding.

They're entering the boat because they were told to. They're going in the direction they were summoned to go. In other words, they are a company of obedient disciples, actually involved in doing what they were told to do by their Lord Jesus Christ.

Now I think this is basic, this is essential to an understanding of the passage. They're not here because of self-will. They were not caught in the storm because they disobeyed.

They're not caught in the storm because the judgment of God is upon them. They were disciples. They were obedient disciples.

They were involved in the very thing the Master had them do. Yet they ran into a storm. Now this incident teaches us therefore that not all the storms of life are encountered in the process of disobedience and flagrant violations of the divine law.

Oh, I remember Isaiah's words. The wicked are like the tossing sea. There is no peace, says my God, to the wicked.

I remember that and that is so. One also remembers the fact that there are storms encountered on the pathway of disobedience. Jonah learnt that to his consternation.

He did not want to declare the message to Nineveh and he chose his own way and there was a storm on the way of disobedience. Indeed, Simon Peter was to learn that a little later on when he went to the high priest's courtyard when Jesus had told him specifically not to follow him then. There are storms on the way of disobedience.

But my friend, we've got something different here. This is the storm, this is a storm that was encountered in the process of obeying the master's behest. They were doing his will.

They were going to the place he had appointed for them. They were his own very people doing his own will and yet they meet the storm. Now I shouldn't be at all surprised that this morning somebody needs to be told this.

They do us a great disservice and they're usually found in evangelistic circles, very evangelistic circles. They tell us that the Christian life is all sunshine. It's like travelling in a marvellous limousine with all the

comforts inside, whatever it's like outside.

You don't worry about the hills. There are no hills and there are no clouds in the sky. There's no up and down.

It's all straight. In fact, it's downhill. And you have all the comforts and all the provisions.

There's no battle, there's no wrestling, there's no dimension that would involve you in a problem or a cross. President, it's no mere misrepresentation. It's a sheer, unmitigated lie.

And even though it comes from the lips of an evangelist or a pastor, it's a lie. Did not Jesus say, if any man will come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and in another gospel he adds, take up his cross daily and follow me. Now you don't take up the cross and say, you know, something attractive, and you put it on your breast, ha, look at me, that's not the cross.

It's not something in your lapel. A cross is a thing on which you're going to die. And the New Testament speaks of a cross, it speaks of blood and suffering.

When Jesus said, he that will come after me, he must take up his cross, he meant there is sorrow, there is suffering, there is dying daily. As Paul says, I die daily, he says. Our Lord and his apostles were constantly telling their prospective followers of this.

There is no way in the footmarks of a crucified Lord in a world that is fallen without encountering the fury of the world that crucified him. If we are loyal to him in a fallen world, sooner or later we shall be wounded, be it in spirit or in body. Now that is the first thing.

These people were obedient, and of course, it is relevant to us, you see. I have met many dear Christians, and I'm quite sure that the storms that had overtaken them were not because of disobedience. But they've been taught, if you're sick, you've necessarily sinned.

If a storm has come upon you, you've necessarily broken the law of God. Not necessarily. All sickness and all calamity in this world is here ultimately because we're in a fallen world.

And when God has finished with this world, there shall be no tears, there shall be no heartache, there will be no sighing, there will be no sobbing. That's quite a different thing from saying that the storm that overtakes the saints of God and the way of obedience means really that they're not obeying. Quite a different thing.

Here we have disciples obeying their Lord, and yet they run into a storm. I think it is not without some significance that this prayer letter came into my hand this week from David Lundy. Some of you have read it.

May I just refer to one incident? He refers here to a young man who after a period of active consideration of the issue has become a Christian. And having shown how he received Christ as saviour, then he says that is only the beginning of the story. Yogish, that's his name, has gone home to his orthodox Hindu family only to be beaten and kicked out of his home.

He had been warned that it was costly to follow Christ here in his New Testament evangelism. Even his college friends tried to poison him, but still he shared his new joy and peace with others as he had been taught to do. Now that's not the end of the story because his father accepts him in the end.

But you see, there were sorrows, storms on the way of obedience. And I want to tell you dear Christian people this morning you may encounter storms on the very path of obedience into the storm. These were obedient in the storm.

As evening shadows lengthen, we see that little group of men making for the other side of the lake and then suddenly, it's dark, suddenly it overtakes them. One of those boisterous, totally unexpected storms that would brew on the Sea of Galilee and does of course to this very day. It's because of the location of the sea itself being so far below sea level and so forth.

When evening came, we read, the boat by this time was many furlongs distant from the land, eaten by the waves, for the wind was against them. Now Mark adds this little type. They were distressed, says Mark in Romans.

Matthew focuses attention upon the fact that it was really a terrifying little storm. We say little from our vantage point because we knew it was soon to end. It wasn't a long drawn out thing but of course they did not know how long it was going to last.

Matthew focuses our attention upon the winds and upon the waves, but Mark says they were distressed. They, the rowers, the disciples, they were distressed. They were really about to pack it in.

That's the significance. Fishermen, though some of them were, they were floundering terribly and they were not a little abreast. Now we want this morning particularly to focus attention not so much on the storm but rather upon the Savior in the storm.

The Savior coming, dealing with his disciples and meeting them. You see the question very naturally arises. It especially emerges in the thoughts and in the minds of those who are not committed Christians.

But it also emerges in the minds of thoughtful Christian people. All right. He has sent his disciples this way.

He knew the storm was brewing probably. This is how it is put. He knew the thought was brewing.

Where is he when they are in the storm? What is the Savior doing when his servants are caught in this fury, in this gap? Now my friends I want you to notice what the passage tells us and this is really the message I would like to get across this morning. What is he doing when his saints are in the storm? I want to say three things. One, the passage tells us that he is watching over them.

Let me read verses 23 to 25, sections of them anyway. And after he had dismissed the crowds, that is the 5,000 fed a little earlier on. After he had dismissed the crowd he went up into the hills by himself to pray.

But the boat by this time was beaten by the waves for the wind was against it. He is praying on the side of the hill yonder. They are down there in the water on the Sea of Galilee.

They are in the storm. He is on the slopes of the mountain over here. Now Mark adds again another little touch which is very significant.

Mark says in 6.48, And he saw that they were distressed in rowing. Says Matthew, they were distressed in rowing. Says Mark, he saw that they were distressed in rowing.

What a difference, isn't it? He saw. There on the hillside, overlooking the scene of his disciples' distress, their Lord and their Savior was watching and praying. Praying and watching.

Communing with his heavenly Father. He was also out of that communion with his Father supervising the progress of his people in this little boat stormed by. It's a wonderful picture.

Just get it. Don't miss this. There on the Palestinian hills is the Son of God watching over his own.

But not alone. He is involving his Father on the slopes on the throne of glory so that the Son on the Palestinian hill and the Father on the throne of glory are together talking about it. Together looking on.

Together watching the storm. Together listening to the sobs and the sighs and the fears and the unexplained and unexplicable forebodings of those disciples in the boat. Together they keep vigil.

I must say this grips me. Through the first watch of the night. Through the second watch of the night.

And the third. Into the fourth watch of the night before they ultimately decide to do something. But they're watching all the time.

He that keepeth Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps. The Father and the Son are watching the saints in the struggle with the storm. Oh my friends, let us get it.

It needs to be said and it needs to be embraced by every man and woman of faith. Your Lord and mine is not careless of what's happening to you and to me. And though physically withdrawn from us he is not actually away from us.

Of course, taking this against the background of the whole New Testament truth, we should really be preaching the doctrine of the paraclete of the Holy Spirit of the other self. That has not been yet revealed in the progress of divine revelation but it is all there. And we understand this in the light of that great doctrine.

But he, he is not careless of the needs of his people. He's watching. I've always loved that.

And especially sung to a well-student. Oh, the deep, deep love of Jesus. Spread his praise from shore to shore.

How he loveth, ever loveth, changeth never, nevermore. How he watches all his loved ones, died to make them all his own. How for them he intercedeth, watches all them from the throne.

And here we have a faint picture of what is now proceeding in the glory. We have the Savior, the Son of God, tucked away up there somewhere in a lonely place where no man, no human being is with him. But where he is in communion with his Father and engaging his Father as well as himself in watching all his people in the storm.

It was a young girl, rescued by two well-to-do people from the slums of a certain town, sent to have a first-class education and who had ultimately graduated. It was from her lips that I heard this song, first of all. I know he watches me.

His eye is on the sparrow, and I know he watches. Men and women going out into the fray and into the storm of life because you're obedient to your Lord, know this will you, his eye never hidden, he watches. If

time permitted us, I would like to go to the book of the Revelation.

You know, to each church in the book of the Revelation, the risen, ascended Lord says this, I know you. Now you have it in Revelation, chapter 2, verses 2, 9, 13 and 19. Chapter 3, verses 1, 8 and 15.

To each of the seven churches, he wants them to know, I know. I know everything about you. I know your circumstances.

I know your enemies. I know your problems. I know it all.

I'm looking on. Oh, how we need to know that. Watching.

The second, waiting to intervene. Watching over them and watching over us. Secondly, waiting to intervene.

Now it may seem a little strange to our ears that he should wait to intervene. Did we not begin by stressing the fact that these were his disciples? We did. Did we not likewise stress the fact that they were actually doing his bidding and he meant them to get to the other side? We did.

Well then, why pause? Why wait to intervene? Surely he should have stepped in as soon as the storm began. No, my friend. No, no, no, no.

Because you see, the storm that he permits, he so permits because he is able to use it to a high end. The storm that our Lord plans or permits, he plans or permits in order to use it to bring something out of it. I find it difficult to learn this lesson.

I can learn it for a moment and then I tend to forget it. And when the storm comes, you know, I've forgotten it again. It's like the devil taking the seed away.

But you know, it is true. This is what the book says. This is Christian testimony.

The storm that my Lord either allows or plans, it doesn't matter which, he allows or he plans because he is able to make it the means of grace. There is something that I can have in the storm he allows that I could never have if the storm did not come. Now you obedient people, you folk who are going out on the king's business this week, you who are going to seek the law, you who are going to be witnesses and you mean to be his loyal servants, my dear people, let's take this to heart.

If he allows a storm to rise on your little lake, even though it may threaten to suck you under, that storm is allowed because there is something that you can get out of that storm you could not get if you didn't get into the storm on the way of obedience. Well, what is it? What is it that they can learn? Well, I suppose one necessary lesson that we all need to learn in every storm is the point that there are so many things in life that we are incapable of negotiating alone without him. You see, that's a trifling thing, that.

To allow a storm to come into our life, just to teach us that we can't do it ourselves by our way of obedience. You know, this is one of life's major lessons from the Christian point of view. Said our Lord Jesus Christ in that great John chapter 15, you know, he says to the disciples, apart from me, severed from me, you know, he says, you can actually do nothing.

And the problem with so many of us Christians is this, that we think that we can do so much without our Lord. That's why we don't pray more. That's why we are not really involved in the business of intercession.

We really believe, oh, well, it's not all that important, we know what we ought to be doing, we've got the Bible, we'll tell the truth, we'll do this, that, and the other, and we'll do it on our own. So, it is necessary, and it was necessary here for one thing, to see that even though some of them were fishermen, in somebody's own personal boat, probably Simon, as a guest, in familiar waters, even so the storm that has come is such that they cannot negotiate themselves. Over and over again we have to learn this lesson, and you know, many, many of the times of waiting for divine intervention in the experience of God's people, many such times are due to this.

We have to come to the place which Paul speaks of in 2 Corinthians chapter 1, where we have the sentence of death in ourselves. And where we see we can't do it. There is more than that here.

There is more than that here. There are certain lessons that are to be imparted in the storm, which can only be imparted right there, imparted right there, on the sea, in the midst of the fury, in the midst of the gale, in the very teeth of the challenge of the hour. And that brings me to the third theme, and it will be our last this morning.

Watching and waiting, now walking towards them, as yet they have not learnt, you see, they have not learnt to expect the unexpected from their Omnipotent Lord. At this stage, their knowledge of Jesus Christ was imperfect. We are now living, we are now pursuing them as they were living in the early months, the early period of his ministry.

And even though they had been with him for so many months, as yet their knowledge of him, or shall I say, their convictions concerning his person were not fully matured. There's a world of difference between a hunch and a conviction. There's all the difference in the world between something that is emerging, a kind of notion that you have, and a conviction that it is so.

What I'm saying is this, that these truths that are emerging, these convictions in the bud have not yet matured. And so, they've not yet learnt to expect the unexpected from him. Have you? Now this comes out here, you see, because even though they've seen him feed the five thousand men beside women and children out of a few loaves and a couple of fish, they've forgotten all about it when they get into the storm.

And they become so obsessed with the storm, they've forgotten the significance of the miracle. They've forgotten that he's Lord of Nature. And that was the meaning, that was the meaning of the miracle.

Now, take a good look at what happens. I can only give it to you in picture in order to begin. Here it is.

He comes majestically, walking sovereignly upon the very billows that threaten their disaster. And whereas the sea is sucking them down into the briny ocean, he's walking sovereignly, majestically, unafraid, in total command of what threatens them. It's a marvelous picture.

And mark you, he's coming unsolicited. We don't think that there was any prayer, any plea for help. If Jesus answered any plea, it was the plea of fear rather than the plea of faith.

You know, I'm glad about that. Glad and yet sad, if you know what I mean. He hears our expressions of fear sometimes and comes to us when we have no faith to bid him come.

They did not ask him to come. They did not know where he was. They did not pray.

They did not see, according to the record. But there was fear in their hearts. He knew the fear, and he came.

And they were afraid. And here he comes in regal majesty, unsolicited, knowing all that was going on. And he comes, first of all, to bring the voice to a storm, to a conclusion, and then to impart peace to their hearts.

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