

Verses to Cope With Crises

by William MacDonald

William MacDonald emphasizes the importance of faith and encouragement during crises in the Christian life, drawing on biblical examples and personal experiences.

Duration: 45:47

Scripture: Psalm 126:5-6, Romans 8:31, 2 Corinthians 2:12, 2 Corinthians 2:14, Colossians 3:24

Topics: "Crises"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the story of Jesus calming the storm in Mark chapter 4, verses 35 to 41. He emphasizes the idea that even when we feel like the boat is about to sink in the midst of adversity, Jesus is with us and can bring peace to our lives. The speaker also highlights the importance of staying faithful to God's mission, even in the face of challenges and discouragement. He shares examples of individuals who remained steadfast in their service to God and encourages listeners to trust in God's power and grace.

Transcript

I'll try to speak it again at the end of the meeting so that you'll go away with it ringing in your heart. I'd like to express my thanks as one of the speakers and a guest here at the conference for all the kindness that has been shown. I got used to it last year and I enjoyed it and this year was a replay.

Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance for ye serve the Lord Christ. Now some of you may feel that in the last evenings you heard the great wind and felt the earthquake. So tonight is the time for the still small voice.

In Christian life and service there are changing moods. There are times of ups and times of downs. You find it with the servants of the Lord in the scriptures.

And some may be having their downs as we all do at times. And I just want to go over the scriptures tonight to show that the constellations of Christ are not too small for us. For instance, do you ever have feelings of defeat and failure? I do.

How do I encourage myself in the Lord at a time like that? Well, the passage of scripture that Dr. Gooding took up with considerable finesse, I felt. And I'd like you to look at it again. Not that I can add anything to it.

It's just how the Lord has used it in my heart. 2 Corinthians 2, verse 12. 2 Corinthians 2, verse 12.

Paul says, furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel and when a door was opened unto me of the Lord, I had no rest in my spirit, because I found not Titus my brother. But taking my leave of him, I went from thence into Macedonia. Now, thanks be unto God, I'm going to use the revives which always lead us up in triumph in Christ and make it manifest through us the savor of knowledge in every place.

I cannot tell you how many times the Spirit of God has led me to this passage of scripture. He takes my mind to the maps at the back of the Bible. I see Troas there on the western shore of the country of Turkey.

I see Paul there in what you might call a successful mission. God had opened a tremendous door for him there. They would call it a revival in modern evangelical circles.

Everything was going wonderfully well, but he didn't have rest in his spirit. He was disturbed. Why was he? Because of what was happening down in Carthage.

What was happening down in Carthage, he longed to hear from Titus. And he couldn't stay there in Troas. In spite of the fact that it was a door opened to him in the Lord, he just couldn't stay there.

And he took a ship and went across the Aegean to Macedonia. Dear friends, to anyone's mind that could spell defeat. To leave a fruitful sphere of service because of a troubled assembly and because he was longing to get news from Titus as to what was happening down in Carthage, that could spell defeat and failure.

But by a daring figure of speech, Paul pictures the Lord Jesus marching across the Aegean Sea from Troas to Macedonia, and he following in Christ's train. Isn't that wonderful? And he had good reason for doing it, too. Often times what seems like failure and defeat in Christian service can be transmuted into victory by the Lord.

You think of Paul and his prison experiences. What a tragedy that a man like that would ever have to go to prison. And yet out of those prison experiences came those epistles.

Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon, 2 Timothy. And it's a wonderful thing to read those epistles because there isn't even a smell of a prison about them. You'd never know that, except for the occasional mention.

And even then he never says a prisoner of Rome, always Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus. He can dignify his imprisonment by associating it with the risen, exalted Lord Jesus Christ. I think that's wonderful.

That's been a help to me. Much of what I'm going to say tonight is autobiographical, how the Lord has spoken to my heart in the changing moods of Christian life and service. And of course you only have to go over to Paul's writing, Romans chapter 8. If God be for us, who can be against us? You say, a lot of people can be against us.

Yes, but you must apply the word successfully, because it's certainly implied in the passage. If God be for us, who can be successfully against us? And the answer is no one. The waves may seem to be against us, but the tide is sure to win.

Thank God for that. Sometimes do the problems mount so high in your life and service that you are driven to weeping, or that you feel like weeping? God has a solution to that problem, too. Psalm 126, verse 6. No pillow like this.

No sedative like this. Psalm 126, verses 5 and 6. They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.

The Jewish people had come back from captivity, back in the land. At least some of them were. Some of Judah were back in the land.

But they hadn't been able to plant any crops. What were they going to do for a food supply? They had to wait a year to get a crop. But they had brought some grain back with them.

And here's a Jewish farmer, and he has a stack of grain there, and he has to make a decision. Shall we eat it now, enjoy it to the full, or shall we live sacrificially now and sow the rest? In hopes of a bountiful harvest. And so he goes forth, and the grain is in the apron in front of him, and he dips his hand in it, and he sows the seed broadcast over the land, and the tears are dripping down into the seed in his apron.

Why? He's thinking of his wife and children back home. Living frugally, living sparingly, in hopes of an abundant harvest in days to come. And the word of God says, They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.

He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seeds, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his seeds with him. I want to tell you there are a lot of tears shed in Christian service, but they're precious to God. May he count them in his bottle.

And more to be feared than tears are dry eyes in the service of the Lord. Somebody said, Lord, deliver us from the curse of a dry-eyed Christianity. How we can be dry-eyed? We think of the sufferings of Christ for us.

We think of a dying world. We think of men and women going down to an eternal hell. We say, am I a man or a stone? It causes you to wonder.

Do you sometimes feel rejected by those to whom you go with the gospel? Oftentimes we do. It hurts to be rejected, doesn't it? It hurts not to be received. A verse that's been helpful to me in that connection is Matthew 10 and verse 40.

He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me. What it says to me is, don't feel rejected. They're not rejecting you.

They're rejecting the Lord Jesus. That's it. You're there as his representative.

And what a dignity that is. What a dignity that is, and what a privilege to be treated that way. Didn't he tell us that we would be treated that way, too? The disciple is not above his master, and we cannot expect better treatment than he received when he was down here.

Some years ago, a young man was packing up and leaving France to come back to the States, and he met Fr. Tallio Duclos. Tallio Duclos said to him, What's the matter? He said, I'm going home.

He said, Why are you going home? He said, A sore nose. He said, What do you mean a sore nose? He said, So many doors slammed in my face. But I'd have liked to have given him Matthew 10 and 40.

Don't worry, dear friend. They weren't slamming it in your face. They were slamming it in Jesus' face.

But just think of what it meant for you to be there in the stead of the Lord Jesus, enduring that for him, but also seeking to make him known to others. Do you sometimes think the boat is going to sink? Well, I think we all go through that at times when the waves are high and the sea is boisterous, it seems that the boat is about to go under. Mark chapter 4, verses 35 to 41.

Mark chapter 4, verses 35 to 41. The same day when the even was come, he saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side. And when they had sent away the multitude, they took him, even as he was, in the boat, and there were also with him other little boats.

And there arose a great storm of winds, and the waves beat into the ship, or the boat, insomuch that it was now full. And he was in the hinder part of the boat, asleep on a pillow. And they awake him and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish? And he arose and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Be still.

And the wind ceased. And there was a great pause. And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? How is it that ye have no faith? And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him? I remember years ago, being at the Sea of Galilee, we were going to go out in a boat on the sea.

And right at the very last minute, the trip was canceled. We said, What's the matter? And he said, Great wind coming down from the north in the gorge of the Jordan, and the most hardened seamen there in Tiberias wouldn't go out of the Sea of Galilee. Because when that wind comes down through the caverns of the Jordan and hits the Sea of Galilee, it whips it up into tremendous white foam.

Not the place to be. I want to tell you something. Greater storms could rise in the human heart than on the Sea of Galilee.

And I don't doubt that even in a gathering like this, there are tremendous storms going on. We wear nice clothing outwardly, and nobody knows the heartache, the sorrow, the tension that's going on inside. But praise God, we know someone who can stand up and say, Peace be still.

My experience in life is that nobody can speak words of comfort to me like the Lord Jesus Christ. A wonderful thing when he comes in and speaks peace to my troubled heart. I love those lines of Amy Carmichael.

Thou art the Lord who slept upon the pillow. Thou art the Lord who soothed the furious sea. What matter beating wind and tossing billow if only we are in the boat with thee? Keep us in quiet through the age-long minute while thou art silent and the wind is shrill.

Can the boat sink when thou, dear Lord, art in it? Can the heart faint at latest? I want to tell you this comfort in that. Can the boat sink when the Lord is in it? Dear friends, he is in the boat with us. In spite of all the storms that may come upon us, we are safe and secure in him.

Do you sometimes feel like giving up the medicine for you? In 1 Corinthians 15.58. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord. Hold on to that tonight. Your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

I cannot document this story. I heard it. I knew the man personally.

When I was a little boy, there was a man that used to come to our house. His name was B.C. Greenman. I can very vividly remember him giving me a testament and extracting a promise that I would read it every day.

A promise I promptly broke. I heard that one time B.C. Greenman was working in an obscure, out-of-the-way place, and he got discouraged. One night after a midweek meeting, he decided to give up and go home.

There was a long walk from where he was to the railroad station. As he walked along, he passed a country farmhouse. It was late at night, but there was a lean-to outside the house.

As he passed by, he could see that the housewife was out there late at night doing the family washing and singing. Lamb of God, our souls adore thee while upon thy face we gaze. There the Father's love and glory shine in all their brightest rays.

And he said, B.C. Greenman, you're a coward. He turned around and went back to the work of God and never looked back. In eternity, that dear woman will find out that her singing that night saved a man for the work of the Lord.

And a good man, too. That's going to be thrilling at the judgment seat of Christ, isn't it? Deeds of merit as we thought them, he will show us were but sins. Little things we had forgotten, he will show us were for him.

When I get tempted to discouragement, I think of something that Dwight L. Moody said. Not part of the inspired word, but it's good. He said, I've never known God to use a discouraged man.

That brings me up short. I do want the Lord to use me, and it helps snap me out of my discouragement. Remember it, dear friend.

If you're prone to discouragement, I've never known God to use a discouraged man. That would mean woman as well. Do you sometimes feel that your work has been fruitless? I wouldn't be surprised if most of us have had that experience.

You know, we do have crises, experiences in life, don't we? We do. And the devil knows when to come in. I create these thoughts in our minds.

I can remember going through a very rough patch in life many years ago. I was at my wit's end, I confess it. And I got a letter from a sister who could not possibly have known what I was going through.

There was no way she could know what I was going through. And she wrote this letter. At the bottom she wrote, Isaiah 49.4. Isaiah 49.4. Never heard of it.

So I turned in my Bible to Isaiah 49.4, and I read these words. It said, I have labored in vain. I have spent my strength for naught, and in vain.

Yet surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work, or my recompense. I tell you, that was the voice of God speaking to me that day. I thought I had labored in vain.

I had spent my strength for naught. And God, days before that, said to this woman, write Isaiah 49 at the bottom of that letter. Isn't that a wonderful experience to think of our sovereign God and the way he can

direct people to get just the right word to you at the right time.

I've had that experience several times in life. I can remember a time when I was nervously exhausted and I had a heavy schedule. It was a Saturday afternoon and I was in my office and I was absolutely desperate.

Desperate. I was practically beside myself. And a man called from one of the assemblies, a man whose roots were deep in God.

He didn't know what was happening in that office. He said, I just called to tell you that God has laid a burden on my heart to pray for you. And when I hung up the phone, I bawled myself clear.

Literally, bawled myself clear. Think of a God who cared enough for nobody to lay it upon somebody's heart to do that. So have you had that experience? It's wonderful, I'm sure.

I remember when my mother died. This is getting a little off the subject. My mother died and we were inconsolable in many ways.

Because you know when your mother dies, that's the crashing of the castles in your life in a way. And friends crowd around and they really seek to be kind. And they say what they think to be nice things, but oftentimes they don't say a thing.

You know what I mean? It doesn't do any good. And then we got a letter from dear old H.A.I. And he quoted Psalm 30, verse 5. Weeping may endure for a night, but joy... Now that snapped our grief. Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.

I'll tell you, it's worth having sorrows. It's worth having trials. It's worth having crises in life.

Have the Lord draw near and speak to you like that. And I'm sure we could have a testimony time here tonight, and many of you could give illustrations of that very thing. So when you feel that your work has been fruitless, that you've toiled in vain, remember Isaiah 49, verse 4. Then I said I've labored in vain, I have spent my strength for none.

And in vain. Yet surely my judgment is with the Lord. I'm going to get justice from the Lord, and my recompense with my God.

And in that connection I also get a great deal of encouragement out of Isaiah 55, verses 10 and 11. If I'm tempted to feel that my labors are fruitless. Psalm 55, verses 10 and 11.

For as the rain cometh down and the snow from heaven, as the rain cometh down and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth in buds, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth. It shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I send it. Let me tell you what that says to me.

When the rain starts coming down and the snow from heaven, it's irresistible. All the armies of the world can't stop it. That's the way the word of God is.

Dear friends, in disseminating the word of God, in disseminating the scriptures, we're engaged in a ministry that can't fail. It may seem to be that way, but it won't fail. All the armies of the world can't stop

God's word from going forth.

And there's something else in this passage. It says to me that the word of God is never ministered in the power of the Holy Spirit without producing results in hearts and lives, though you might not see it. That's something to cling to.

There's a twofold consolation in that verse. First of all, the word of God is irresistible. It's going to accomplish that which he sent it forth to do.

It's never ministered in the power of the Holy Spirit of God without accomplishing great things for him. But you might say, that's just the trouble. I don't see much in the way of immediate results.

Well, frankly, neither do I, if it's any comfort to you. I look back over my Christian life, and I think that a lot of people say, well, everything must be a mountaintop experience for him. Everything must be gloria in excelsis.

Everything must be cloud number nine. That isn't the way I have found it. Most of my life has been a daily routine.

Steady, hard work day by day. And you go along like that for quite a long while, and you say, I wonder if anything is being accomplished. And just then the Lord has a way of dropping a little handful of purpose.

And you think, well, I think I'll go along a little longer. That's the way it has been with me. And of course, Ecclesiastes 11 and 1 is a helpful verse to me in that connection.

Ecclesiastes 11 and verse 1 says, Cast thy bread upon the waters, for thou shalt find it after many days. I have found it so. Isn't that wonderful? I don't even know what the first part of that verse means.

Cast your bread upon the water. I've heard all kinds of explanations that it means sowing seed in marshy grounds or something like that. Certainly you don't cast wonder bread upon the water, do you, in that sense? It's wonderful to me that I don't even know what the first part of the verse means, and yet the whole part of the verse makes sense to me.

And you prove it in the experiences of your life. Cast your bread upon the water. You'll find it after many days.

It's really kind of nice, too. I believe there are Christians who see a lot of immediate results. There are.

Thank God for them. There are people who are reapers. Thank God for them.

That just hasn't been given to me. But it's nice to go to a meeting sometime and a lady comes up to you and says, Do you remember twenty years ago when we met in that ramshackle little building downtown? And you came one night and you preached on assurance of salvation. That was the night I got assurance of salvation.

Twenty years later. But the wonderful thing is that the Lord sustained me during those twenty years without seeing a lot of immediate results. Just being willing to go on and know that his word is producing results in hearts alike.

Whether I see it. Somebody said heaven will be the best place to see the rewards of our service. The Lord loves us too much to let us see very much of it down here.

Have you suffered betrayal? Hatred? Disappointment? The loss of a ministry? Persecution? Or loneliness? Just a little list of some of the things that come into our life. Have you suffered any of those things? Yes, I have. How do you cope with it? A verse in Colossians has been a tremendous help to me.

Colossians chapter 1 verse 24. I think it's just the Lord that ministers this to you, because ordinarily reading that verse I wouldn't see that in it. Colossians chapter 1 verse 24.

Paul is speaking there and he says, Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church. Paul says it's given to us to share the sufferings of Christ down here. Not his atoning suffering.

We can never share in them. He suffered, bled, and died alone. But there are a lot of sufferings left behind that we can share.

That has been a blessing to me to think in some of the changing moods of life that I'm privileged to share the afflictions. Let me give you an example. Loneliness.

Do you ever get lonely? I think of Mark chapter 10 verse 32. Mark chapter 10 verse 32. A verse that's really been a thrill to me.

I never read it without getting a thrill out of it. Verse 32 of Mark chapter 10. It says, And they were in the way going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus went before them, and they were amazed.

And as they followed, they were afraid. Let me tell you what the verse says to me and how it's a comfort to me. They're going up to Jerusalem.

For what? To his death. To his death. Who's out in front? Jesus is out in front.

Why did the disciples marvel? They marveled that his feet weren't leaden like theirs were. What is the significance of it? The significance of it was that there was a loneliness connected with that. What was the loneliness? He outstripped his disciples in zeal for God.

He outstripped his disciples in zeal for God. And I cannot read that verse without marveling myself at the blessed Lord Jesus, hasting on to Jerusalem, going faster than the disciples for the joy that was set before him. I'd hate to think what my legs would have been like.

But there was a loneliness connected with that. I've never known that. Lonely.

That particular loneliness. I've known loneliness. But what it strikes me, praise God, Jesus was lonely.

And it's given to me to share in a very small measure the loneliness that he suffered when he was here on earth. Some years ago, I went through a very severe trial. In connection with the discipling of another person.

It was a very, very bitter experience that I wouldn't care to share with anyone. I got a letter from a brother in Motherwell, Scotland. Once again, how would he ever know what I was going through? Motherwell, Scotland.

And he's writing along, first of all, about some tapes by A.W. Tozer that he wanted. But then he got in a little meditation and he said, And remember, brother, there's no discipleship without pain. That was wonderful.

That was wonderful. That's just what I needed. There's no discipleship without pain.

What a comfort it is to know that. That when you're pouring out your very best for the Lord Jesus, and the difficulties and the trials and the perplexities come, and you're suffering pain, you're hurt, you can't sleep in your bed at night. There's no discipleship without pain.

He knew it. The Lord Jesus knew it, didn't he? He knew the pain of working with those men. Of seeing one of them betray him.

And one of them deny him with oaths and curses. And all of them forsaking him and fleeing. Do you feel that your servant has become jaded? That you feel faded? That you're in a rut? That you've lost the original thrill and enthusiasm of the ministry? It's easy.

The years have a way of doing it for you. And we fall into the illusion of the routine. And the work can somehow, sometimes, become a great thing for us.

To recapture the glory of the ministry. Isn't it? That's what we need, I think, constantly. To recapture the glory of the ministry.

Some years ago, Calvin Coolidge called on missionary John Mott to be an ambassador of the United States to one of the countries in the Orient. And John Mott said to him, Mr. Coolidge, years ago, God called me to be his ambassador. And I have been deaf to any other call ever since.

He had never lost the glory of the ministry. One of my favorite writers, we were talking about Christian writing today in the workshop. One of my favorite writers happens to be J. H. Jowett.

I love the way he can use human vocabulary to describe the glory of the ministry of the Lord Jesus. And I took a quote from him that I'd like to share with you. It's rather long, but it's really worth it.

He says, A man who enters through the door of divine vocation into the ministry will surely apprehend the wonderful riches of Christ. Doesn't that make you proud to be a missionary? You cannot get away from that wonder in the life of the Apostle Paul. Next to the infinite love of his Savior and the amazing glory of his own salvation, his wonder is a refreshing glory.

His calling is never lost in the medley of professions. The light of privilege is always shining on the way of duty. His work never loses its halo.

And his road never becomes entirely commonplace and gray. He seems to catch his breath every time he thinks of Gilmore, who am less than the least of all saints. Is this grace given that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ? For this cause I, Paul, do you not feel arrested upon him the ordination of the pierced hand? That abiding wonder was part of his apostolic equipment and his sense of the glory of his calling.

We shall become like traders in a common market babbling about common wares. That's good. Let me say that sentence again.

If we lose the sense of the glory of his calling, we shall become like common traders in a common market babbling about common wares. This sense of great person... I like this. It will save us from becoming minor officials in transient enterprises.

Wow. It will make us truly big and will therefore save us from spending our days in trifling. Emerson has somewhere said that men whose duties are done beneath lofty and stately domes have a stateliness of demeanor.

Men whose duties bring them under great domes cannot breathe. And when he quotes this verse, I shall run. Maybe the Lord would have some of us take a vocation here at this conference of this.

And we may go away with that dignity of demeanor, the dignity of stripes, a holy vocation. Go on. Go on.

There's all eternity to rest in, and far too few are on the active list. No service for the Lord is risky to invest in, and nothing will make up should his well done be missed. Let us pray.

And after we pray, we'll sing our little chorus through once again. O Father, we thank you tonight that it is true the consolations of Christ are not too small for us. We thank you that you never allow the trials, the difficulties, the discouragements to come into life without giving abounding grace.

We pray for any here tonight who may be going through some of these changing moods that we have spoken of when we do such. Turn the words that have been spoken as only you can do to meet the need of individual hearts here tonight. Now the God of peace who brought again from the dead the Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, makes you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever.

Amen. Thank you, Jesus.

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