

As evening came, Jesus said to his disciples, "Let's cross to the other side of the lake." So they took Jesus in the boat and started out, leaving the crowds behind (although other boats followed). But soon a fierce storm came up. High waves were breaking into the boat, and it began to fill with water.

Jesus was sleeping at the back of the boat with his head on a cushion.

The disciples woke him up, shouting,

"Teacher, don't you care that we're going to drown?"

When Jesus woke up, he rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Silence! Be still!"

Suddenly the wind stopped, and there was a great calm. Then he asked them, "Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?" Mark 4:35-40 New Living Translation

An Article of Hope by Dan Hitz

Many of us have wondered where Jesus was in our trials, or why the trials even happened in the first place. I often hear people ask with agony on their faces why Jesus isn't setting them free even though they have begged and begged Him to help. They wonder why the trials even happened in the first place. I've wondered the same thing myself. There are times when all of us ask like the disciples did, "Jesus, don't you care that we're sinking?"



Many of us have put walls around our hearts because we've been hurt and we're afraid of getting hurt again. We think these walls protect us from unsafe people. The problem is that safe people respect our walls – our boundaries – and the unsafe people don't. Those broken walls that we think protect us are the very walls that keep us from being set free. We end up being a prisoner in our own dungeon. Unfortunately, it is those very same walls that keep us separated from Jesus. – the very One who can set us free.

It often works this way. We're in intense pain because we've suffered from intense trauma. We've been told since day one that if we have a problem, we should ask Jesus for help and He will come right away to help us. With that statement comes the implication that our problems will disappear and that the abusers in our lives will go away. The problem is that our expectation of what was supposed to happen didn't at all match up to what truly took place. We began to experience trauma. We asked Jesus for help. We expected Him to come to our side and end the trauma immediately. He didn't. We expected Him to prevent the trauma altogether. He didn't. The trauma happened. The trauma continued. We hurt and we blame Him. We built up walls in our hearts in the hopes that no one will ever get close enough to us to hurt us again. We're afraid that God might not ever be there for us so we decide that we'll take matters into our own hands and protect ourselves. God is placed on the other side of those walls. But we still hurt. We desperately beg Him to come into our lives and take the pain away. He moves towards us, but gets blocked by our walls. Our abusers didn't respect our walls. They plowed right through them and trampled us. Our abusers didn't respect us. They didn't respect our "No!" Jesus does. He honors us. He honors our walls. He respects our "No!" Even when it seems like it would actually be to our benefit to violate our walls and our "No!". Jesus respects us, He honors us, and He is safe!

More than anything, Jesus values us. He DID take our sin and iniquities upon Himself. He DID take the cross, suffer, and die for us. And He DID provide for us His resurrection life to bring us into the fullness of what He has to offer. But He WILL NOT EVER force that upon us. Those are just some of the differences between our abusers and our Savior. They didn't respect us – Jesus does. They didn't die to themselves for us – Jesus did. They didn't care about healing our hearts – Jesus does.

That's what makes Jesus safe. He honors our free will choice. He brings healing as we learn to trust Him, allow Him to help us take down our walls brick by brick, and allow Him into the inner portions of our heart. The respect and value that he shows us makes Him the safest one to allow behind our walls and into our most intimate place. There, He brings healing and begins to cleanse us from the pain. We learn our value by His example and begin to walk according to the love He has shown us. We learn to allow Him to be our watchman to show us who is safe and who isn't. He gives us value when others deface us. As we stand in the honor that He gives to us, the temptations to devalue ourselves and numb our pain are replaced by the truths that we don't have to settle for sin and the brokenness others offer us. Jesus wants to give us a vision of what is right and we don't have to settle for anything less.

So what about the question of why the abuse happened in the first place? If Jesus values us so much why did He allow the abuse to happen at all? I've asked that question myself. In the same way that Jesus will not violate our free will, He will not violate the free will of others... even when doing so would have been in our best interest. Sin, disease, and death happen because we live in a fallen world. Adam and Eve chose to eat the forbidden fruit and brought all of us under the curse. Everything that happens is not Jesus' perfect will for our lives.

Jesus never promised that tribulation wouldn't happen, but He did promise that He would never leave us or forsake us. I have been blessed to sit with people as they allow Jesus to enter the walled off portions of their hearts and receive the healing He has to offer. I have been blessed to see years of pain fall away as they see that Jesus never abandoned them in their time of need, but He was there the whole time shielding their spirits from the death blows that Satan was aiming at their hearts. The Bible does not say all things are good. The Bible says all things work together for good to those who love God and are called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28).

God wants us to talk to him about our abuse, our pain, and the anger that we have towards Him because He didn't protect us like we expected. The Lord invites us to come and reason with Him in Isaiah 1:18. He wants to hear our heart. We can talk to Him about our pain. We can talk to Him about our anger. He will respond in love and speak truth to our hearts – truth that brings life, peace, strength, and vision. It is in His presence as He redeems the terrible things that have happened to us that He transforms us into the men and women of God that He wants us to be.

I have personally experienced the love of God in the middle of my abuse memories to restore and to heal. The abuse happened. Jesus didn't violate the free will of my abuser, but He was there the whole time guarding my spirit. Satan intended my abuser to destroy me. By God's grace, I am still standing. Jesus has – and continues to – restore what the enemy has taken from me. He continues to empower me to stand where I formerly fell. He continues to empower me to hold on to Him in the middle of the valleys, as we walk toward the next mountain. One day I had an extremely intense prayer ministry session where I was processing through one of the most traumatic events in my life. After it was over I told my friend who was praying for me that I was going to pray that the Lord would make me the kind of man I would have been if I had not gone through the trials that I went through. I stopped half way through my first sentence. I realized it was the redemption of those terrible trials in my life that has made me the man of God I am today. What the enemy intended for evil, God has used for good.

As many of you know, my wife and I experienced the death of our 17 year old son almost nine months ago. Losing John has been the most painful experience of my life, yet I've met the Lord in so many powerful ways since then. I've had my moments... they haven't all been good... YET GOD IS ALWAYS FAITHFUL! One day as I was crying out to Him in agony, I could picture the joy of Heaven and became angry that I had to go through the things I was going through here on the earth. It was then that the Lord burned deep into my heart that it was far more important for me to meet with Him in the middle of my trial, then for the trial to be over. With that word, the Lord acknowledged that I had no way of understanding on this side of eternity how that could be true. With that word came the reassurance of His love and peace that one day... for all of us... we will understand the beautiful things that Jesus Christ has made out of the ashes of our lives (Isaiah 61:3). With that word came the reassurance that Jesus loves us and that NOTHING in our lives here on earth will be overlooked in eternity.

If you are in the middle of a storm in your life, reach out for help. Don't try to get through your trials alone. Reach out to your Christian friends, your pastor, a believing counselor, or Reconciliation Ministries for help. Reach out to safe others who can help you meet Jesus in the middle of your pain and receive the healing that His heart longs to bring you. He wasn't asleep in the disciple's boat because He didn't care that they were going to drown. He was asleep in the disciple's boat because He fully trusted in the heart of His Father to bring the disciples through the storm and to the destination that He purposed for them before the world began.

If you're in the middle of a storm and you feel like Jesus doesn't care if you drown, reach out for help. Call Reconciliation Ministries at 586.739.5114. Licensed professional counseling and prayer ministry is available.

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