

Finding God in the Storm – Dan Hitz

***I was sure by now, God, You would have reached down and wiped our tears away.
Stepped in and saved the day. But once again, I say "Amen", and it's still raining.***

***As the thunder rolls I barely hear You whisper through the rain, "I'm with You".
And as Your mercy falls, I raise my hands and praise the God who gives and takes away.***

I'll praise You in this storm, and I will lift my hands.

For You are who You are. No matter where I am.

Every tear I've cried, You hold in Your hand.

You never left my side, and though my heart is torn I will praise You in this storm.

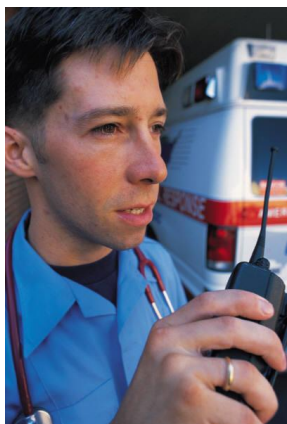
"I'll Praise You in this Storm", from the Casting Crowns Lifesongs CD. Reunion Records, 2005.

God is sovereign. Yet in this fallen world things happen to us that we never expected in a million years. At those times in our lives when we find ourselves in the wilderness, are we at the point where we can say like Job, "The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised."? (Job 1:21 NIV) We know that a

sovereign God can reach down and deliver us in a heartbeat. We may even remember times in our lives when He did. Yet, we sometimes find ourselves in the middle of a wilderness where our faith in God's goodness is challenged. Even Jesus begged His Father to take the cup of wrath from Him. He pleaded for another way to accomplish God's purpose in His life. Finally after sweating great drops of blood Jesus spoke the words, "Not my will, but Yours be done." His heart surrendered to the will of His heavenly Father... a good Father who chose not to deliver Him from the pain... a Father who knew the eternal plan.



Where are you in your journey right now? Is God an ever-present help in time of trouble, or are you straining to hear His voice in the midst of the storm? Even Jesus was challenged to choose God's will. If it were easy for Him, He wouldn't have prayed three times for another way... He wouldn't have sweat great drops of blood. Still, Jesus trusted the heart of His father and carried His cross. He was obedient. He ministered salvation to the dying thief, and forgiveness to those who were torturing Him. Yet in the end, even Jesus asked why God was forsaking Him (Mark 15:34).

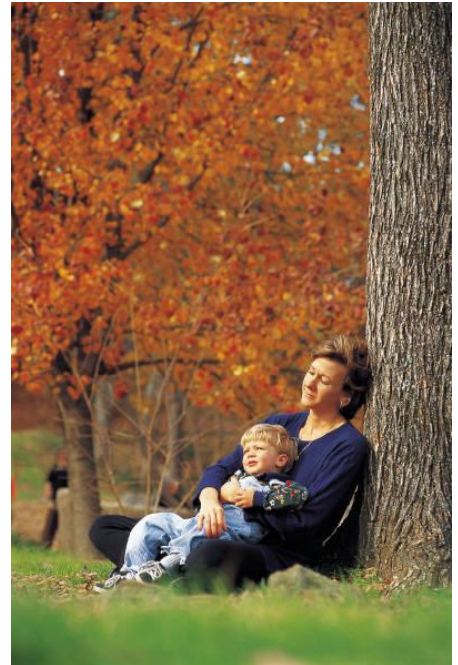


Are you in the middle of a trial? Maybe you've been obedient to walk the difficult paths the Lord presented you. Maybe you've even laid down your life for those God sent your way. Maybe those very paths and the people you've loved are the source of your pain. You wonder why your obedience seems to have been rewarded with pain. Like Jesus, you're asking the Father for another way.

Jesus promised us trouble in this life (John 16:33), but somehow we usually don't read that verse in the pocket promise books. We hope we never pull that verse out of our daily Scripture cards. Maybe we were all hoping that He forgot about it. He didn't. In the same breath that He

promised us trouble, He also told us to rejoice because He overcame the world. Then He prayed and thanked His Father for revealing His glory through Him and pouring it upon the disciples. Jesus' prayer in John 16 and 17 flows with great love for the Father and those around Him. He then experienced the cross. He demonstrated to us that although He would have chosen an easier way, the Father's way is always best. Jesus, Himself, was willing to embrace the cross and endure the pain. Jesus lived His life as an example for us. Just as He suffered for His obedience, embraced the cross, spent a season unaware of God's presence, and obeyed even to the end; we too are called to seasons of the cross. And just as Jesus was resurrected to new life, we who hold fast to God during the great unknown will be raised to new levels in Him. A deeper walk... a deeper trust... a deeper awareness of the Father's heartbeat for us.

Ruthless trust isn't easy. There are times in our lives when we have to admit to God that what we think He is doing seems insane. There are times in our lives when we have to agree with 1 Corinthians 1:25 which reads, "The foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength" (NIV). As we make the choice to say to the Father, "Not my will, but Yours", we open the way for resurrection life to flow. Maybe we'll be in the "tomb" longer than we'd like, but there will be a day when we hear the words "Lazarus, come forth" and our grave clothes will be removed. We'll experience a deeper understanding of who our Father is, and who we are in Him. We'll experience a deeper understanding of the words, "'For I know the thoughts that I think toward you,' says the Lord, 'thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.'" (Jer 29:11 NKJV)



One day as I was receiving healing prayer from some pretty severe childhood wounds, I started praying that the Lord would change my heart to be like I would have been if I had never experienced the pain. Halfway through the first sentence I stopped and said, "I'm not going to pray this prayer". I realized that meeting God in the middle of the pain is exactly what made me who I am in Him today. I am better off having experienced God in the darkness than if I never had the tears. That is what gives me hope during the new valleys of pain that come my way. When the Father's heartbeat seems so distant, the past experiences of being carried in the darkness hold me until I sense His presence again. The day is coming when He will hold us close to His chest and we will hear His heartbeat once again. A day when our hearts will beat in unison with His. May all of us who are presently in a dark place hold steady to God's goodness until the stone is rolled away and we hear the worlds of life, "[*INSERT YOUR NAME*], COME FORTH!"

If you're in the middle of a storm and need help, call Reconciliation Ministries at 586.739.5114. There is hope and healing through the power of the cross.