

KEEPING FAITH IN THE STORM

Psalm 46:1 CEB God is our refuge and strength, a help always near in times of great trouble.

Philippians 4:6-7 CEB Don't be anxious about anything; rather, bring up all of your requests to God in your prayers and petitions, along with giving thanks. ⁷ Then the peace of God that exceeds all understanding will keep your hearts and minds safe in Christ Jesus.

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Imagine for a moment that you are driving through the country with your family. Maybe you planned on going for a picnic or are going to the lake. The kids are singing in the back of the car and they do not have a worry in the world. Then you start to realize that the sky is getting darker and the weather has dropped to a cooler temperature. The wind is blowing the branches on the trees and the rain has started pouring down. The next thing you know thunder is crashing above you and lightning bolts are striking through the sky. It is getting harder to see out of the windshield because of the rain and there is nowhere to pull over and take shelter. The wind is so strong that you can feel it shaking the car and the kids are getting scared. The only thing you can do is keep driving until you find shelter and you start praying to God, asking him to protect you and your family. After a little while of driving you see that the sky is getting lighter ahead. The wind has died down and the rain is only a drizzle. You can still hear the thunder and see the lightning but it is further away now. The kids in the back have calmed down and have started singing again. Then when you look out the windshield you see a gorgeous rainbow in the sky. That is the moment that you realize that God has brought you through the storm and you pray to God thanking Him for keeping you and your family safe.

We are all on a journey in our Christian faith and through the journey we will be faced with many storms along the way. As many of you know my family has been going through a lot of struggles since Blake has been born. One day while I was at work, my friend said to me, "Jennifer, there are three areas that a person can be on in their journey. The first area is when you are not yet in a storm. The second is when you are in the midst of the storm. The third is when you are coming out of the storm."

I started thinking about this and I realized that when you are in the area of your journey when you are not yet in a storm it is easier to rely on God. Psalm 4:8 says, "I will lie down and fall asleep in peace because you alone, Lord, let me live in safety." During those moments of peace that you feel such a sense of tranquility, when everything is calm and quiet those are the moments when it is easier to praise God. These are the times that you are in your car with your family driving through the country. Everything is going as planned and there is not a care in the world. You find those times to talk to God about what is going on in your life, thanking Him for His many blessings, and asking guidance on situations that could come about.

During the area of your journey when you are coming out of the storm, it is easier to rely on God then also because you know that God can and will bring you through anything. After the great flood, Noah exited the ark and God made a covenant with him. In Genesis God says, "I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth. Whenever I bring clouds over the earth and the rainbow

appears in the clouds, I will remember my covenant between me and you and all living creatures of every kind." Just as God was with Noah during the devastating flood, He promises to be with us during our seasons and storms of life as well.

It is the time when you are in the midst of the storm that should be the time that we rely on God the most, but that is when it is the hardest. When you are in the middle of the storm, and you are scared, worried, angry, confused, or even heartbroken it is hard to talk to God and listen for his answer. That is the time that I often say, "Why God?" We lose our faith so fast in times of trouble. It is easier to focus on all the things going on around us instead of focusing on God to guide us through. There are so many times in the bible that Jesus asks, "Where is your faith?" For example: Matthew 14:28-32. "Peter replied, 'Lord if it is you, order me to come to you on the water.' And Jesus said, 'Come.' Then Peter got out of the boat and was walking on the water toward Jesus. But when Peter saw the strong wind, he became frightened. As he began to sink, he shouted, 'Lord, rescue me!' Jesus immediately reached out and grabbed him, saying, 'You man of weak faith! Why did you begin to have doubts?'" As long as Peter kept his eyes on Jesus he was walking on the water with no trouble, but as soon as he started focusing on the wind and water he started sinking. That is what happens to us when we stop focusing on God. If we focus solely on our situation and not on trust in God then we will start to sink as well. Keeping our faith that God will lead us through the storm is the most important thing we can do. Sometimes the storms in our journey can cause us to lose so much that is important to us, but we have to keep our faith. In Job, we see a man who God allows to be attacked. He is an example of faithfulness as he loses everything important to him yet remains faithful to God. This is such an amazing example of God's sovereignty and faithfulness during a time of great suffering.

The question for each of us today is this: Where are we in our Christian journey of faith? Is life easy, so that it is easy to trust in God? Or, with God's help, have we come through a difficult time in life, so we trust in the trustworthiness of God? Or still, are we going through a difficult time in life, hoping for and clinging to God's help and faithfulness, simply because of the promises found in scripture? We know from experience, from the Bible, and especially from the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ that God is faithful and trustworthy in all times of life.

O God, our help in ages past,
our hope for years to come,
our shelter from the stormy blast,
and our eternal home.

Before the hills in order stood,
or earth received her frame,
from everlasting, thou art God,
to endless years the same.

O God, our help in ages past,
our hope for years to come;
be thou our guide while life shall last,
and our eternal home. Amen.

May the Lord dig up the stones of pain, regret, and angst from your soil and deliver you once and for all.

May He turn over the soil of your heart and plant new seeds of faith, vision, and purpose specific to your life's calling.

May He heal those deep places that nag you.

May He strengthen those weak places that leave you feeling vulnerable.

And may He overwhelm you with a fresh revelation of His love so you can believe that NOTHING is impossible with God on your side!