

Passing Through

I was once in Italy on Lake Garda setting out on a boat trip. As we began to leave the harbour the waves started getting higher and the ship started going up and down. How exciting, I thought, this could be like a roller-coaster ride. So with others I went to the front of the boat, wrapped my arms around the railings and felt the full force of the boat as it rose and sunk, metres! Suddenly a huge wave came smashing over the front of the boat and drenched us! The Captain ordered us inside 'now!' Eventually we did get back safely but it was a bit interesting!

Another time I was flying back from working in Delaware in the USA. We'd been in the centre of the projects in a very dangerous area helping with some children's work. As we came back it was the worst turbulence I'd ever experienced – around 4 1/2 hours of non-stop and sometimes dramatic turbulence (meaning the plane would shake and sometimes suddenly drop). It was pretty frightening and we wondered if we'd make it back. People were very scared around me. But we did make it back. God was with us!

The Bible

In Isaiah 43.1-2, the prophet speaks a word from God saying this:

“But now, this is what the Lord says—
he who created you, Jacob,
he who formed you, Israel:
“Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;
I have summoned you by name; you are mine.
When you pass through the waters,
I will be with you;
and when you pass through the rivers,
they will not sweep over you.
When you walk through the fire,
you will not be burned;
the flames will not set you ablaze.

What Is God Saying?

The point is that God promises that we go through. We don't get stuck in times of trouble – God will help us through them. That's what the Bible says when we pass through the waters God is with us and when we go through the fires God is with us.

We don't just go through; the waters won't sweep us away and the fires will not set us on fire! Just like when I was on the boat in Italy, we went through the waters but we came out from underneath without being swept away. And just like in the book of Daniel, the three who went into the fire did not get burned (in fact they didn't even get singed or even smell of fire). And the end result was glory to God and people seeing that God was the one true God!

And just like in the New Testament when the disciples crossed to the other side, they went through a storm. But they weren't harmed and God was testing their faith and bringing them up higher. In fact in a way they missed what Jesus was doing and missed out on being part of it. We don't want to make that same kind of mistake.

There's some worship songs I'd encourage you to listen to if you're struggling in times of trouble or being anxious – especially thinking of the Coronavirus time or similar:

'Stronger' by Matt Gilman/Influence – <https://youtu.be/s9-6pPpGVqQ>

'Egypt' by Cory Asbury – <https://youtu.be/uEeCl1KyXil>

'Christ Be Magnified' by Cory Asbury/Cody Carnes – <https://youtu.be/NblcmQ22Eel>

'The Blessing' by Kari Jobe/Cody Carnes/Elevation – <https://youtu.be/Zp6aygmVzM4>

'Benediction' by Matt Redman – <https://youtu.be/K6cf0V62PSU>

(links all checked 8 April 2020)

So three things to encourage us

1. God will bring us through. He is in control and working good for his name and glory and for his people.
2. And we get to be part of what God is doing and go where he is going.
3. These storms make us realise we need God, that only God can help, that man and man's wisdom only go so far.

Focus

We become like what we spend time with and focus on. So turn your eyes away from the bad news (and lies) on the internet and in the media. Instead look at Jesus – seek him, pray, worship with a new sense of passion and love for God and his words in the Bible. And remember that you are 'covered' and protected by God through the blood of Jesus. Just like the Israelites were protected from death by putting the blood of 'lambs' on their doorposts, so we can take refuge and find safety in Jesus, the Lamb of God who gave his blood and died so that you can live now and forever.

Whatever your trouble, this too will pass and one day (soon) we will be with Jesus in a place of unimaginable peace and joy.